Unraveling the Persian Knot:
Indirect Approaches towards Iran

**A Monograph
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Abstract

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In 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini's indirect approach ignited existing socio-economic conditions during the Iranian Revolution to topple the Shah. A similar indirect approach using psychological operations to target audiences through key vulnerabilities and networks may have applicability for strategies today. Joint Pub 5-0 defines the indirect approach as the employment of attacks on an adversary's derived vulnerabilities when conditions do not permit direct attacks against a defined center of gravity (COG). [1] "A COG can be viewed as the set of characteristics, capabilities, and sources of power from which a system derives its moral or physical strength, freedom of action, and will to act."[2] Using a combination of operations, an indirect approach targets the COG by attacking key adversary weaknesses or requirements. When performed successfully, an indirect approach can isolate, sever, defeat, or degrade adversary capabilities to ultimately prevent their use. In the Shah's case, Khomeini focused on Iranian public opinion to degrade the monarch's legitimacy, and also military morale and unity to effectively neutralize the Iranian armed forces.

Ayatollah Khomeini effectively unified various Iranian opposition groups through a common hatred and desire to overthrow the Shah. Most significant, the Ayatollah accomplished this while residing entirely outside Iran's borders using psychological operations as the primary arm of his approach. Joint doctrine defines psychological operations as, "planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence the emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals."[3] Often misunderstood, psychological operations require sufficient time in order to work but given appropriate time the effects can often be dramatic. Khomeini's synchronization of psychological operations with coordinated internal political violence successfully detonated underlying frustrations. This continued until it reached what Malcolm Gladwell calls *the Tipping Point* when the opposition suddenly unified and full mobilization occurred resulting in the Shah's removal.

Today, fear of a similar psychological invasion haunts the Iranian leadership generating more angst than all other potential military threats.[4] The Iranian regime has every reason for concern. Although they led the Islamic Revolution thirty years ago, now in their fifties and sixties, the regime inner circle finds itself increasingly out of touch with today's Iranian youth in 2009. No longer catering to regime wishes as their parents did, today's youth despise both political and religious edicts. This desire for social freedom presents a constant struggle between the Iranian regime and its largest, most disgruntled, and often unemployed segment of the Iranian population.[5]

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[1] *Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operations Planning,* IV-18

[2] Ibid., IV-8

[3] *Joint Publication 3-53, Doctrine for Joint Psychological Operations*, 5 September 2003, ix.

[4] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 20.

[5] Bakitari Bahman, "Iranian Society: A Surprising Picture, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 80, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

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Introduction

In 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini's indirect approach ignited existing socio-economic conditions during the Iranian Revolution to topple the Shah. A similar indirect approach using psychological operations to target audiences through key vulnerabilities and networks may have applicability for strategies today. Joint Pub 5-0 defines the indirect approach as the employment of attacks on an adversary's derived vulnerabilities when conditions do not permit direct attacks against a defined center of gravity (COG). [6] "A COG can be viewed as the set of characteristics, capabilities, and sources of power from which a system derives its moral or physical strength, freedom of action, and will to act."[7] Using a combination of operations, an indirect approach targets the COG by attacking key adversary weaknesses or requirements. When performed successfully, an indirect approach can isolate, sever, defeat, or degrade adversary capabilities to ultimately prevent their use. In the Shah's case, Khomeini focused on Iranian public opinion to degrade the monarch's legitimacy, and also military morale and unity to effectively neutralize the Iranian armed forces.

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[6] *Joint Publication 5-0,* IV-18

[7] Ibid., IV-8

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groups, and individuals."[8] Often misunderstood, psychological operations require sufficient time in order to work but given appropriate time the effects can often be dramatic. Khomeini's synchronization of psychological operations with coordinated internal political violence successfully detonated underlying frustrations. This continued until it reached what Malcolm Gladwell calls *the Tipping Point* when the opposition suddenly unified and full mobilization occurred resulting in the Shah's removal.

Today, fear of a similar psychological invasion haunts the Iranian leadership generating more angst than all other potential military threats.[9] The Iranian regime has every reason for concern. Although they led the Islamic Revolution thirty years ago, now in their fifties and sixties, the regime inner circle finds itself increasingly out of touch with today's Iranian youth in 2009. No longer catering to regime wishes as their parents did, today's youth despise both political and religious edicts. This desire for social freedom presents a constant struggle between the Iranian regime and its largest, most disgruntled, and often unemployed segment of the Iranian population.[10]

Although hundreds of historical accounts exist covering the Iranian Revolution, this document's significance resides in six primary reasons. First of all, Khomeini executed his indirect strategy while residing almost entirely outside Iran's borders. Also, the Ayatollah's employment of psychological operations provides a unique example of influence forming a strategy's main effort. Next, the Iranian socio-economic conditions that ignited the discontent of revolutionary fervor may now closely mirror those of 1979 especially if the current economic

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[8] *Joint Publication 3-53,* ix.

[9] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 20.

[10] Bakitari Bahman, "Iranian Society: A Surprising Picture, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 80, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

down turn continues. Unlike 1979, US military force presence now practically encircles Iran, providing unparalleled influence opportunities that did not exist thirty years ago. In sharp contrast to the industrial period of the 1970s, information age communication technologies can provide multiple points of entry making Iran far more accessible today. When the Ayatollah bombarded Iran with his ideas, network theories were either non-existent or not widely understood. Today network theories offer new possibilities for analysis and insights as to how dramatic tipping points and rapid change can be achieved.

This research will examine the socio-economic conditions that fomented popular dissent and forged Iranian unity resulting in the overthrow of the Shah and explore similar contemporary emerging conditions and vulnerabilities. Both past and present Iranian conditions and vulnerabilities will be explained by using the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's definitions found in the target audience analysis process of psychological operations doctrine.

> Conditions are any environmental situation over which the target audience has virtually no control but have an effect on the target audience…Target audience analyst …list these conditions under the following categories: economic, political, environmental, social, psychological, communications or military…Vulnerabilities generally correspond to the conditions previously listed…Target audience analysts evaluate four interrelated psychological factors of perception, motivation, stress, and attitudes…vulnerabilities exist because of the conditions listed.[11]

By assembling a historically accurate chronology of the Revolution's psychological activities primarily from eye witness accounts, this research will reconstruct Khomeini's campaign. To do so, this research will propose two models: one of the Revolution's indirect approach and also an influence model pertaining to Khomeini's communication process. These

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[11] *FM 33-1-1, Psychological Operations Tactics Techniques and Procedures,* [Fort Bragg, NC: U.S. Army JFK Special Warfare School, 1994], 6-6 to 6-7.

two models and historical chronology will describe and explain the major phases, objectives, sources of media, target audiences, and key themes and symbols utilized in the exploitation of vulnerabilities that enabled dramatic success.

The end-state of this research should demonstrate how Khomeini's indirect psychological approach, actions, and activities destroyed the Shah's legitimacy; neutralized the armed forces; and usurped major secular and liberal political competitors to consolidate power. Specifically, this research will show how Khomeini's combined use of psychological operations and utilization of key networks enabled wide communication access, distribution, dissemination, and resonance with the Iranian people. Lastly this research will provide lessons of the Revolution; observations of emerging Iranian conditions and vulnerabilities; identify key propensities in the current Iranian system; and provide recommendations for potential applications to strategy.

Phases of the Revolution

Once the socio-economic conditions fully ripened, Khomeini most likely saw the opportunity for full mobilization emerge as news of rising dissent increasingly reached him in An Najaf, Iraq. No evidence suggests Khomeini ever officially published or disseminated a written campaign plan to the opposition. According to Jahangir Amuzegar, who served as the Ministers of Commerce, then Finance, and also as an Ambassador under the Shah, he says the overall strategy or campaign to remove the monarchy, giving the impression that such a design only existed in the mind of Khomeini.[12]

Upon examination, the revolution's indirect approach seemed to progress in four distinct phases. The first phase began with Khomeini's exile to An Najaf, Iraq. This phase focused on

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[12] Jahangir Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution, The Pahlavis' Triumph and Tragedy*, [Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991], 10.

fomenting dissent creating demonstrations of an angry populace starting in mid-1976. Deteriorating Iranian socio-economic conditions provided key vulnerabilities for Khomeini to attack indirectly through psychological operations. Amuzegar believes Khomeini sought to portray the Shah as morally un-Islamic and an illegitimate ruler of Iran with the intent being to focus on the Shah's legitimacy.[13] Khomeini's propaganda easily ignited demonstrations fueling the populace's disillusionment over shortages of: food, goods, services; price hikes; power outages; and urban overcrowding. Meanwhile, still outside Iran in An Najaf, Iraq, Khomeini increased cross border infiltration of his message on cassettes heightening growing popular dissent as the economy worsened. See Figure # 1.

Khomeini's Indirect Approach

1. Exploit Conditions to Foment Dissent
2. Co-opt Mosque Network
3. Unify Opposition
4. Mobilize Masses to provoke Civil Disobedience
5. Paralyze the Economy, Government, and Communications
6. Divide / Co-opt to Neutralize the Iranian Military (Operational COG)
7. Eliminate the SAVAK
8. Consolidate / Usurp Power from Secular Allies to form an Islamic Government

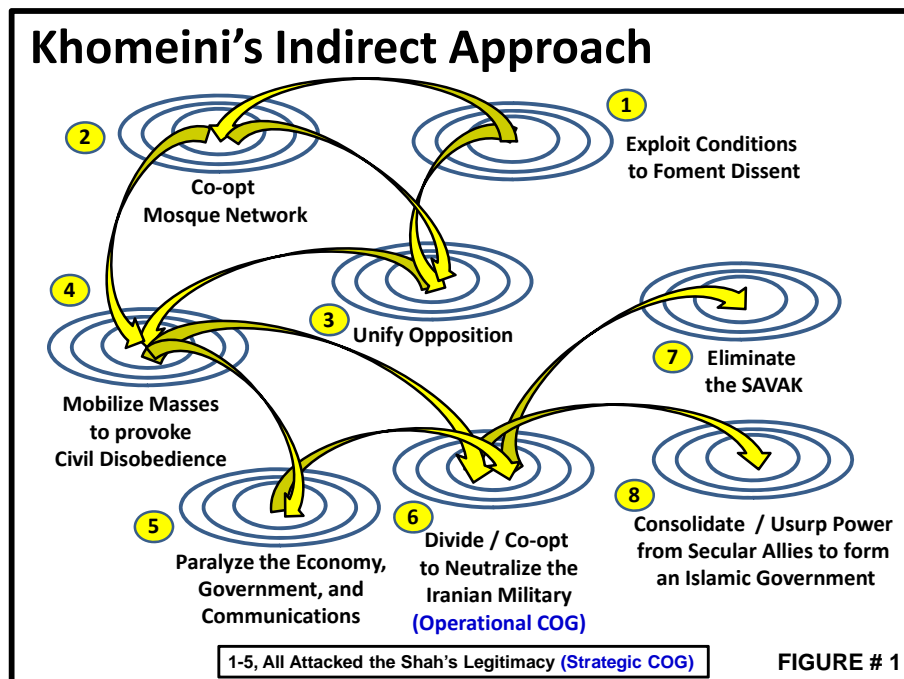1-5, All Attacked the Shah's Legitimacy (Strategic COG)   FIGURE # 1

Figure: 1 Khomeini's Indirect Approach[14]

[13] Ibid., 259.

[14] Author, Figure: 1 - Khomeini's Indirect Approach, depicted by the author based on JP 5-0, IV-18.

Khomeini's second phase focused on co-option of the mosque network and unity among political opposition groups. By mid-1977 Khomeini succeeded in unifying a loose coalition of groups. Although still largely fragmented, they unified to seek resolution of their multiple grievances.[15] As a chief prerequisite, Khomeini successfully co-opted key clergy members to gain control of the Iranian mosque network. This facilitated mass distribution and dissemination of his message to support unification of the political opposition and eventually the Iranian masses.

Khomeini's third phase, full mobilization of the Iranian masses and disruption of the government and economic activity, began after January 1978 when nation-wide political protests emerged. After sufficiently raising the level of internal dissent and unifying the political opposition, Khomeini sought to paralyze key government ministries and agencies by instigating a prolonged series of strikes in key sectors of the economy and government. Mass mobilization would produce civil disobedience on a national scale. This resulted in attacks on: commercial enterprises, street demonstrations, riots, arson, and nation-wide strikes and closures among the oil industry, ports, customs, electrical workers, banks, railways, commercial air, news agencies, and government ministries.[16]During this phase, the Shah exiled Khomeini to Paris from An Najaf, Iraq, but this resulted in international media becoming the decisive psychological weapon. Simultaneously, Europe's state of art telephone communications networks provided Khomeini the command and control needed to direct and coordinate supporting political warfare activities.

Although Amuzegar views the mass exodus of politicians, civil servants, military officers, and businessmen as a continuation of this third phase, this largely occurred in what

[15] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 290.

[16] Ibid., 291.

should be described as the fourth phase of the Revolution. [17] The fourth phase involved Khomeini's consolidation of political power. Upon his return to Tehran, the Islamic revolutionaries clearly usurped key secular and liberal political rivals within the opposition. To accomplish this unimpeded, Khomeini first needed to separate the military rank and file from its officer leadership. With the Shah's legitimacy seriously reduced, Khomeini next sought to neutralize the Iranian military through religious and emotional appeals to their loyalties. This took time but removed the most critical lynch pin before an Islamic government could successfully emerge. As the effects of mass mobilization paralyzed the government, the military service chiefs were also paralyzed by indecision enabling Khomeini to easily co-opt key senior military leaders. With this accomplishment, Khomeini had effectively neutralized the armed forces leading to almost uncontested control of the country, providing him freedom to dictate the future form of government. Although Khomeini often spoke of an Islamic government, his intended role and exactly what would replace the Pahlavi government remained intentionally unclear. [18]Operating in this manner enabled Khomeini to maintain the unity of his loose opposition coalition just long enough to seize and consolidate power. With Khomeini's arrival in Tehran, his campaign shifted almost completely to the physical dimension using direct acts of political violence for their specific psychological intent. With the military neutralized, Khomeini's Islamic revolutionaries finished the job by physically eliminating the SAVAK, the Shah's intelligence and security service. They also discredited, terrorized, and seized control from all the secular factions within the opposition. Former members of the Shah's government, as well as secular and liberal

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[17] Ibid., 291.

[18] Ibid., 259.

members of the opposition had to rapidly abandoned Iran or face certain execution. Khomeini's consolidation of political power hijacked what his temporary secular allies had actually started.

Conditions that led to Revolutionary Vulnerabilities

Pre-existing and emerging Iranian conditions of the mid-1970s created key vulnerabilities forming stressors and motivations that ultimately shaped Iranian public attitudes and perceptions. The conditions involved manmade and natural situations over which Iranian audiences had virtually no control.[19] In any environment, conditions arise from "economic, political, environmental, social, psychological, communications, or military" factors.[20] Concerning vulnerabilities, *Webster's Dictionary* defines something as vulnerable when it is "capable of being physically wounded; open to attack or damage; or assailable."[21] For Iran vulnerabilities arose from the "manifestation of unsatisfied or perceived needs"[22] which would provide opportunities or divide or unify affected audiences. See Figure 2.

Although the Iranian Revolution resulted from multiple interlocking conditions, Ken Pollack, a former member of the CIA and National Security Council, has suggested the case can be made that oil was the root cause of the Revolution. When the Shah's campaign to boost oil revenues in the 1970s succeeded beyond his wildest expectations, money flowed into Iran affecting every sector of the economy. Rapid growth occurred in all services, corruption

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[19] *FM 33-1-1, Psychological Operations Tactics Techniques and Procedures,* 6-6.

[20] Ibid., 6-6.

[21] *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary,* [Springfield, Massachusetts: A Merriam-Webster], 1323

[22] *FM 33-1-1, Psychological Operations Tactics Techniques and Procedures,* Glossary-10

increased, and government spending went out of control resulting in an eventual economic

meltdown.[23]
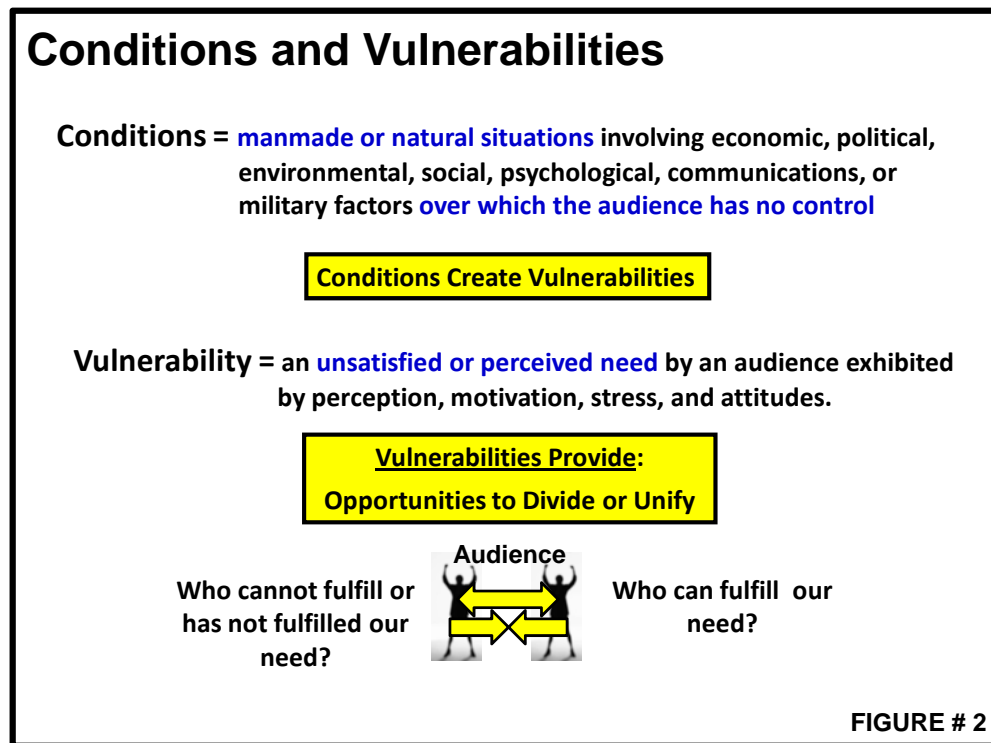
Figure 2: Conditions and Vulnerabilities[24]

       The socio-economic development orchestrated by the Shah from the early 1960s to mid-

1970s could be described as phenomenal. For a time, Iran was rapidly rising as a regional

economic and industrial power. While the economic development and boom period would

maintain the Shah's legitimacy and position, the accompanying social change that began with the

Shah's White Revolution ultimately made him vulnerable for loss of support by Iranian clerics.

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[23] Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, [New York: Random House, 2004], 101.

[24] Author, Figure: 2 – Conditions and Vulnerabilities, depicted by the author based on FM 33-1-1, 6-6 to 6-7.

Until 1962, the clerical community had always supported the Shah even in 1953 during the

military coup to over throw Mossadeq restoring the Shah to power.[25]

The Shah's White Revolution, unveiled in 1962, was a six point plan calling for "land

reform, nationalization of pastures and forests, public sale of state owned factories to finance land

reform, profit sharing in industry, enfranchisement of women, and establishment of a literacy

corps."[26] Prior to this period, the clergy wielded great power and influence controlling large

tracks of land. The Shah's plan broke the paradigm of the upper class consisting of the *bazaaris,*

or traditional Iranian merchant class, large land, and industrial owners. Perhaps unintentionally,

land reform also negatively affected rural tribal structures due to the nationalization of pasture

and water rights.[27]

While the Shah's plan transformed a rural society into a modern industrial one, it also

affected the entire social fiber of the country causing "a certain level of cultural and

psychological shock."[28] Though created with good intentions, land reform produced multiple

negative side-effects. Foremost, with the breakup of large land holdings, new land owners

possessed little understanding of agricultural management like their predecessors. So farm

productivity dropped. This was due to an unexpected exodus of young farm laborers moving to

Iranian cities. This sudden loss of labor left behind large tracts of uncultivated land while

simultaneously inflating unemployment problems in the cities.[29]

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[25] John D Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, [Bloomington, Indiana: [Indiana University Press, 1981], 13.

[26] Misagh Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions, A Comparative Analysis of Iran, Nicaragua, and Philippines,* [Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2000], 34.

[27] M. M Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion*, [New York: Praeger, 1988], 105-109.

[28] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 37.

[29] Ibid., 186.

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The White Revolution also included judicial reforms that affected clerical social and political power reducing their influence over of marriage and divorce. Simultaneously the Pavlavi regime gained control of shrine foundation funds severely limiting clerical financial resources. As the clerical community became increasingly alienated, Khomeini publically emerged as the leading opponent to the Shah's policies being the only political or religious leader who actually called for the Shah's overthrow.[30] In March 1963, Khomeini issued inflammatory public statements as well as a fatwa against the Shah's programs. He opposed the Shah's reforms primarily because they affected the *bazaari*, the largest financial contributors to the clerical establishment. Khomeini also opposed the reforms because they reduced clerical control of rural villages and offered voting rights to women.[31]At the same time, Khomeini claimed the reforms were part of a Jewish and American plot to subvert Islamic influence inside Iran. In May and June of 1963 during Ashoura, anti-government protests became so violent that the Shah had Khomeini arrested resulting in his first loss of support by the clergy since his rule began.[32]It was during Ashura on 3 June 1963 in Qom; Khomeini compared the Shah to Umayyid caliph Yazid, the murderer of Hussein, and implied warnings of the Shah's eventual overthrow. Two days later, at three o'clock in the morning, commandos seized Khomeini and delivered him to Qasr prison in Tehran. He spent nineteen days in prison but was later placed under house arrest in Tehran until 7April 1964 when he returned to Qom.[33] However, on 4 November 1964, just before dawn, Khomeini was arrested again in Qom. This time the Shah immediately exiled him to Turkey.

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[30] Parsa,*States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 135.

[31] Manouchehr Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution, From a Minister to the Shah to a Leader of Resistance*, [Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2002], xix.

[32] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 88-89, 135.

Since Turkish law forbade the wearing of the clergyman's cloak and turban, Khomeini moved to An Najaf, Iraq in 1965. He spent the next thirteen years attempting to mobilize his followers for the Shah's overthrow.[34] Throughout the rest of the 1960s and early 1970s Khomeini's words had little effect on the population inside Iran. As long as the economy was good, the Shah's level of popularity and legitimacy remained unchallenged and from 1970 to 1974 the Iranian economy was booming.

With Khomeini exiled, the Shah's White Revolution the business boom continued. During this period conditions involving improvements in communications, literacy, and education drastically shaped Iran. From the 1960s to 1970s, literacy rates so dramatically improved, for the first time virtually every Iranian had become entirely literate in Persian. Television and radio programming now reached even the most remote communities. These drastic improvement in literacy combined with the regime's mass communication capabilities accelerated a growing feeling of a nation-wide Persian cultural identity.[35] From 1969 to 1978, university enrollments increased from 48,000 to nearly 350,000 students creating a vast pool of university educated citizens for the first time. However, between 1978 and 1979 universities only enrollments dropped dramatically to only 28,000 new students making college aged youth highly vulnerable to recruiting by revolutionaries seeking the disenchanted.[36] A more literate, more educated, more unified, and more far accessible Iran would later work towards Khomeini's favor.

The flaws within the Iranian armed forces primarily concerned its command and control structure. These structural flaws would set the conditions for the eventual downfall of the Shah.

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[34] Kaveh Basmenji, *Tehran Blues, Youth Culture in Iran,* [London: SAQI, 2005], 73-74

[35] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 105.

[36] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution,* 5.

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While the Shah sought to build a modern equipped and trained professional military based on western standards, but he also intentionally structured the military so no cross-communication or coordination could exist between the services.[37] Even though this limited possibilities for an internally generated coup, the disconnected system of command and control would produce paralyzing effects in time of crisis. Without the Shah's presence and leadership all cohesion among the service chiefs and the rank and file would quickly collapse. From 1973 to 1977, the Shah also increased military manpower by 50 percent.[38] This rapid military expansion unintentionally degraded Iranian overall soldier quality and loyalty by enabling the infiltration of Islamist revolutionaries. Because the majority of the conscripts came primarily from rural areas, they were far more religious and thus more vulnerable to Khomeini's message as things began to unravel.

Economically rapid growth and success began with Iran's oil sector. The 1973 Arab-Israeli War provided the Shah with the opportunity to dramatically boost oil revenues. Urging Gulf neighbors to raise prices in October, Arab states collectively increased the price of oil from $3.01 to $5.12 per barrel and then imposed an embargo on oil sales to the United States while simultaneously cutting oil production from 5 to 10 percent. Again in December 1973, the Shah convinced OPEC to boost prices still further to $11.65 per barrel.[39] This quadrupled the price of a barrel of oil, the price of gasoline in the United States, and Iranian oil revenues in a span of less than ninety days. It also caused an oil crisis that sent shock-waves through the world's economy and resulted in the United States spiraling into an economic recession. With its new found wealth,

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[37] Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale*, Washington D.C.: [The Middle East Institute, 1985], 119.

[38] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 29.

[39] Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, New York: [Random House, 2004], 107.

Iran immediately doubled expenditures for development causing a short term boom in its construction sector. So as the Iranian economy began to thrive, public expectations for higher standards of living also increased.

"Iran was not a happy country before the oil boom, but afterward, it was a powder keg."[40] Over the next twenty four months the Shah enjoyed Iran's new wealth while the Iranian people increasingly began to feel the pinch in their wallets. The rapid increase in oil prices at the end of 1973 immediately affected transportation costs that ultimately affected costs of building supplies and the price of everything else. The rapid rise in inflation and housing costs were the first to cause a noticeable effect on Iranians. In 1970 inflation was only 1.6 percent; however by 1974 inflation had reached the mid-teens and averaged between 25 and 35 percent from 1975-1978.[41] Apartment rentals also rose by some 70 percent higher between 1973 and 1976.[42]

The Iranian economy's oil dependence made it highly susceptible to price fluctuations. From 1976 to 1978 economic conditions became increasingly worse. The sudden drop in oil prices shattered the earlier euphoria over the oil boom as Iranian oil exports decreased by 1.7 million barrels a day in 1976. In 1978 oil exports dropped from 4.4 million barrels a day to only several hundred thousand barrels a day.[43]

> It is not poverty that generates revolution but rather a taste of wealth. As income increases, it can boost popular expectations…If the economy then turns sour; the disappointment is much greater than if the people had been left in poverty all along.[44]

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[40] Ibid., 101.

[41] Ibid., 111.

[42] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 9.

[43] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution ,* 4.

[44] Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2004], 85

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As economic conditions changed, this generated key psychological conditions in Iranian society over frustration with the system. The Shah's rapid societal change, coupled with the sharp down turn in the economy, fueled an increase in social and psychological turmoil making the populace ripe for mobilization. As the economic situation worsened, the rift between government and Iranian society also widened. The negative consequences of rapid development would most likely have been tolerated if the economy had not collapsed so rapidly in the mid-1970s. Ports and roads were clogged with western goods that just rotted on the docks; blackouts occurred in Tehran and inflation and housing costs spiraled out of control. Combined with the economic woes, the populace became aware of internal regime monetary corruption and vast budget deficits that threatened to unravel the entire development strategy.[45] All these consequences impacting simultaneously began to unravel the Shah's legitimacy among opposition groups across Iranian society.

The economic situation solidified the bonds between the *bazaari* merchants and the clergy into each others' arms. *Bazaaris* had always had a symbiotic relationship with the clergy as their largest funding source but Iran's suffering economy only strengthened their relationship. While *bazaaris* initially enjoyed the benefits of the boom as prices soared in basic commodities, the government soon implemented price fixing measures in the fall of 1975 to control rising rampant inflation. These price fixing measures greatly angered the bazaaris. Increasingly alienated bazaaris now believed the regime to be "an impediment to development."[46] Simultaneously the regime also imposed higher taxes on the *bazaar* and bank loans were reduced

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[45] Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi, and Ali Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution, Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution*, [Minneapolis: Minnesota,The University of Minnesota Press, 1994], 75-76.

[46] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* ,10.

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affecting small shop owners and carpet makers. Because inflation increased the price of imported wool, Persian rugs became less competitive on the global market fulfilling deeper into profits of Iranian businessmen.[47]

Rapid industrial growth and subsequent economic down-turn affected the country's social and psychological fabric especially in Tehran. From 1971 to 1979, Tehran's population increased from 2.8 million to 5.9 million spurring massive growth of many shanty towns. [48] These rapidly growing shanty towns overflowed with masses of the disaffected, homeless, and increasingly unemployed Iranians that ringed Iran's cities. For these rural peasants, Shia-Islam provided the only thing familiar to them in a period of drastic change. This caused new mosques to spring up overnight.[49] As the economy faltered, all these factors eventually played into Khomeini's favor. Although from different classes, hard times provided bazaaris, clerics, and peasants common ground to connect, in the form of socio-economic grievances, inside the mosque network.

Exploiting Conditions to Foment Dissent: Igniting the Psychological Dimension

Fighting is a trial of moral and physical forces through the medium of the latter. Naturally, moral strength must not be excluded, for psychological forces exert a decisive influence on the elements involved in war. [50]   Carl Von Clausewitz

Gradually, the psychological factor came to be considered as the decisive factor. The physical dimensions of war were relegated to a position of secondary importance; they were found meaningless without due moral and psychological backing.[51]   Brigadier General S. K. Malik

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[47] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions, 205*-207.

[48] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,*10.

[49] Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 118.

[50] Clausewitz, Carl Von, *On War,* [New York: Everyman's Library, 1993], 145.

[51] Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War*, [New Dehli, India: Himalayan Books, 1986], 36.

While Iranian vulnerabilities and their associated conditions of this period proved to be the Shah's undoing, these very same factors worked in Khomeini's favor creating opportunities for both divisive and cohesive psychological operations. Khomeini continually advocated removal of the Shah while projecting an Islamic government as the answer to Iranian needs. As Khomeini unified the masses and the political opposition, he divided the Iranian military leadership and also severed the rank and file's support from its officer corps. Using a combination of physical, social, and electronic networks, Khomeini's message reached audiences provoking them to decision and behavioral changes in favor of his ultimate objective. (See Figure # 3)

Influence Model

Desired Objective

Vulnerability based Themes = Chosen Line of Persuasion

Divisive or Cohesive PSYOP

Vulnerabilities Provide: Opportunities to Divide or Unify

Audience

Media Source
❖Messages
❖Symbols
❖Actions

Networks: Physical - Social - Electronic

Enable Distribution and Dissemination

Feedback

Influence Audience to Decide - Act - Modify Behavior
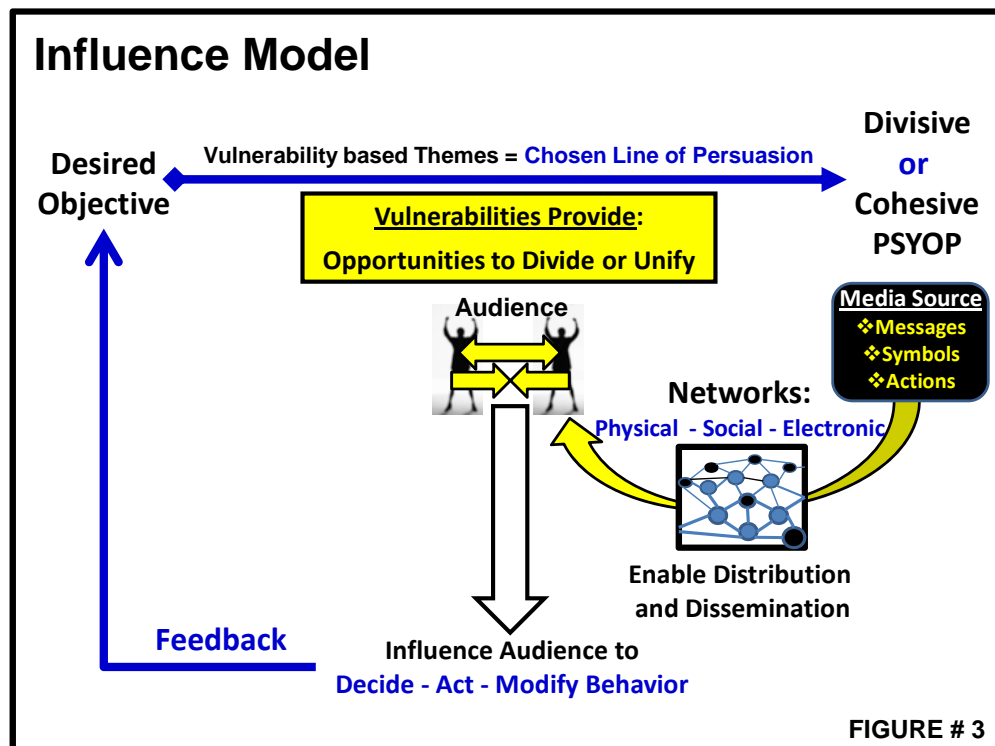
FIGURE # 3

Figure 3: Influence Model[52]

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[52] Author, Figure 3: Influence Model, depicted by the author.

From the time of Khomeini's exile in Najaf, Iraq his ideas continued to permeate Iranian thought through infiltration of cassette tapes of his speeches across the Iran-Iraq border. Khomeini's tapes first only appeared intermittently inside Iran in early 1965 when Iranian pilgrims returned from visits to Shiite shrines of Karbala and Najaf. However, in the mid-1970s improved border relations between Iraq and Iran resulted in the Iraqi government permitting an increased annual flow of Shiite pilgrims to the holy sites. As more than 130,000 Iranian pilgrims crossed the border in 1976, Khomeini's speeches dubbed on cassettes flowed at an ever increasing rate back into Iran. As the Shah became aware of the increasing influence generated by the cross border cassette infiltration, pilgrim travelers were routinely searched at the border upon returning from Iraq. Cassettes, however, continued to make it to their destination and were selling for $25.00 a copy on Iranian streets and in stores throughout the Bazaar.[53] In Tehran alone, some 1,000 shops connected by six miles of covered walkways contributed highly to the rapid dissemination by Bazaar merchants. These same tapes were often duplicated once inside Iran and redistributed through the mosque network. As the mosque network matured it became more efficient at distribution and dissemination eliminating the middlemen, or pilgrims. Tapes and pamphlets were delivered directly to sympathetic mullahs who reproduced them and passed them directly to mosque attendees.[54]

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[53] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 120.

[54] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 45.

18

Co-opting the Mosque Network

"Those socially prolific few who tie the entire social network together."[55]

Malcolm Gladwell

When the Revolution occurred, network theories had not yet permeated the physical and social sciences like today. Today we evaluate an environment by identifying a network as consisting of nodes inter-connected by links. Joint doctrine describes nodes as, "tangible elements within a system that can be targeted for action, such as people, materiel, and facilities. Links are behavioral or functional relationships between nodes such as the command or supervisory arrangement that connects a superior to a subordinate…the ideology that connects a propagandist to a group of terrorists."[56]

Although the mosque network was a key and essential element in spreading and igniting the flames of revolutionary Iran, it was not initially readily accessible to Khomeini. The clergy themselves inside Iran had to be co-opted like all other opposition elements. Non-cooperative clergy eventually found themselves usurped or eliminated by force upon Khomeini's return. Once on board, the mosques provided dissemination hubs connecting the various segments of society. By the mid-1970s, Iran had become very secular. Most of its populace was only nominally Islamic. However, because the Shah never shut down or inhibited activities in the mosques, so initially the mosque became the primary node where the free transfer of communication, organization, mobilization, and eventually collective action could occur.

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[55] Mark Buchanan , *Nexus, Small Worlds and the Groundbreaking Science of Networks*, [New York: Norton, 2002], 114.

[56] *Joint Publication 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 17 September 2006, Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008, IV-4.

In his book *Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell describes how within the context of social networks everyone is connected by only "six degrees of separation." This means that everyone is connected to anyone else in as few as six steps or "a very small number of people are linked to everyone else in a few steps, and the rest of us are linked to the world through those special few."[57] In relation to the Iranian Revolution, neighborhood mosques served as a place where people of all social classes crossed paths and anything could be openly discussed. Social connections between clerics, businessmen, and shop workers interlocked individuals within their own mosque and with neighboring mosques across the country.[58] This made the mosque the nexus where networking occurred. Communications passing through the mosque traveled the entire breadth and width of the country in all cardinal directions. From the mosque, messages propagated further to classrooms, offices, and shops providing outlying connections to homes, apartments, farm villages, and city slum dwellings, touching every individual inside Iran.

As an example, Malcolm Gladwell points out during our American Revolution; there were only seven groups of Whigs within Boston consisting of only 255 men of which approximately 80 percent belonged to only one group. Two men, one being Paul Revere, belonged to five of the seven groups.[59] In the same way Gladwell describes Paul Revere's role as a key connector, influential university students, *bazaaris,* and clerics served as connectors within their communities. It is these connectors who provide, "the socially prolific few who tie the entire social network together."[60] Mark Buchanan, the author of Nexus, makes the point that it is really

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[57] Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point, How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, [New York: Back Bay Books, 2002], 37.

[58] Buchanan, *Nexus,* 117.

[59] Gladwell, *The Tipping Point,* 57.

[60] Buchanan, *Nexus*, 114.

the weak links that perform the greatest function, because they form crucial ties that knit the entire social network together.[61] In the context of Iran, not everyone was immediately sold on the Islamic Revolution; weak links carried the message into every household, office place, and shop pollinating the entire country with Khomeini's message. As Buchanan says, due to this massive interconnectivity, sometimes insignificant changes often cause consequences totally out of proportion to the input resulting in sweeping changes that rapidly transforms industries, communities, and nations.[62]

Unifying the Opposition

At the time of the 1953 coup, the clergy, *bazaari*, and university students had all stood by their monarch enabling the Shah to regain power. Whatever opposition had existed in Iran remained totally fragmented until 1977 when the opposition first began to coalesce into a temporary unified front. The one thing that eventually tied all opposition groups together was a common disgust for the Shah and the way in which Iran was rapidly changing.[63] This one common denominator soon made the Shah the opposition's scapegoat, as a symbol and a source for all of Iran's problems, and the removal of the Shah an overarching theme. However, "it was not the clergy who began the process; rather the kindling was lit by secular intellectuals, many of whom were later engulfed by the revolutionary flames."[64] In May 1977, the opposition voices became louder when Karim Sanjabi, Shapur Bakhtiar, and Dariush Foruhar of the National Front called for the end of the Shah's reign and a return of the 1906 Constitution. All three had been

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[61] Ibid., 43.

[62] Ibid., 158.

[63] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 39.

[64] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 76.

members of Mossadeq's party which was removed by the US-led counter-coup to re-install the Shah in 1953.[65] With multiple groups, the Revolution had no "tightly organized center," instead it spawned from the "activities of many spontaneous groups."[66]Khomeini capitalized on the increasing volume of opposition voices becoming a common symbol of unity among divergent opposition groups in the eyes of the people. The emerging view of Khomeini as a symbol of the Revolution enabled him to, "knit together their different grievances into an opposition alliance," bringing together many different segments of Iranian society just long enough to seize the reins of power. [67]

"By the summer of 1977, the only sources of support for the Shah were the army, a thin layer of high government officials, and a very small segment of the upper middle class."[68] Then late October 1977, Khomeini's son, Mustafa Khomeini, was killed in an automobile accident near Baghdad. Khomeini skillfully used the incident to increase existing dissent, blaming Mustafa's death on the SAVAK, the Shah's intelligence organization for internal security and foreign intelligence collection. By effectively playing on emotions, martyrdom, and sorrow, Khomeini was able to rally the masses of dissident organizations, something he had been unable to do from 1963 to 1967.[69] Although Dr. Charles Kurzman, author of *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, claims no official document has been found, he believes a mobilization order generated from Khomeini must have gone out sometime near the end of 1977.[70] Just as the Shah had rescinded

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[65] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 242.

[66] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 116.

[67] Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle,* 127.

[68] Robert Looney, *Economic Origins of the Iranian Revolution*, [New York: Pergaman Press], 6.

[69] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 40.

[70] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* 24.

his liberalization policies in November, "Islamists began to mobilize in a concerted fashion." [71]

Possibly, as economic conditions worsened Khomeini saw his opportunity to act. Khomeini

believed the first activity that must be undertaken was "propagation" of the cause. In 1970,

Khomeini did not believe Iran was ripe for change but believed time would bring forth fruit

within a generation.[72] Initial mobilization of various groups occurred for a wide variety of

reasons. Their narrow common interests and temporary misperceptions would hold them together

just long enough to remove the Shah. However, each group would become more acutely aware of

the vast differences that separated them as they attempted to form a government after the

monarch's departure.

Liberals actually saw themselves as the forefront of the revolutionary movement and

sought the creation of a Western secular socialist democratic government like those of Europe.[73]

Deceived by Khomeini's vague pronouncements, liberals believed they would eventually become

the primary beneficiaries of the Revolution allowing them to impose their own democratic

reforms.[74] The Liberation Movement was a religious offshoot of the National Front – lead by

Mehdi Bazargan, later selected as Khomeini's first prime minister. Although it favored Islam, the

movement had strong affinities for Western democratic liberties.[75]

Young professionals, intellectuals, and students also had political concerns which

centered on the distaste for the Shah's dictatorial style of leadership and their own lack of

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[71] Ibid., 164.

[72] Ibid., 30-31.

[73] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution*, 15.

[74] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, 129.

[75] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 15.

political freedom and representation. [76] Unlike the *bazaari* who would show great affinity for the clergy, university students were mobilized totally for non-religious grievances and never invited or allowed the clergy to speak on university campuses in the last year and a half of the monarchy.[77] Guerilla organizations, like the Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerillas (Feda'iyan) and the Iranian People's Mujahedeen Organization (Mujahedeen), would also emerge out of the student movement providing security for rallies and marches as the Revolution progressed.[78] Feda'iyan Khalq (People's Freedom Fighting Guerillas) were Marxist in nature linked to the former Tudeh party and desired to establish a socialist republic. The Mujahidin Khalq or (People's Crusaders) political leanings originated from the Liberation Movement. [79]

Workers and farmers grievances, like the bazarris,' focused primarily on economic concerns but involved such things as wages, unemployment, rising inflation and inequalities in standards of living such as the need for electricity or indoor plumbing.[80] Oil workers in particular would wield great influence in bringing the Shah's regime to its knees collapsing the Iranian oil based economy through a series of continual coordinated strikes. Oil workers, instead of bargaining with the government, preferred to work through Khomeini proxies, but their support for Khomeini was purely political rather than ideological.[81]

Islamic radicals, like the Islamic clergy, would not initially lead the Revolution, however, once on board all groups eventually coalesced behind Khomeini as their chief spokesman and

[76] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* , 41.

[77] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 102.

[78] Ibid., 97.

[79] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 14.

[80] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* , 40-41.

[81] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 170-171.

symbol for change.[82]The Islamic fundamentalists who followed the Ayatollah Khomeini insisted upon the establishment of a theocracy founded on strict adherence to Shari'a law.[83]

In the autumn of 1977 the Shah took steps toward liberalization of his policies. This immediately resulted in opposition groups actively organizing toward full mobilization but the clergy did nothing. Clerical inaction outraged Khomeini.[84] Soon, he began distributing money co-opting sympathetic clerics. Once his support achieved a monopoly over the mosque network they effectively blocked other groups from this channel. Anyone who opposed them was immediately suppressed.[85] Although the *bazaari* would be first to unite with the clerical establishment, Parsa attests the *bazaaris* actually possessed very little in depth knowledge of Khomeini's ideological arguments. Instead the Shah's price control measures actually supplied the energy to mobilize the *bazaari* merchants to political action. *Bazaaris'* support for political opposition to the Shah was based on their disenchantment with growing financial losses rather than creation of a theocracy.[86] In late summer of 1977, angry *bazaari* activists began distributing anti-regime propaganda against the government and its policies and refilling the clergies' coffers raising as much as $320 million dollars annually. Much of this funding eventually went to Khomeini.[87] "By the end of summer 1978," [Khomeini's supporters] "had largely commandeered the mosque network."[88] Government monitoring and oppression elsewhere eventually made the mosque the only safe

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[82] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution* , 40-41.

[83] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 15.

[84] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 138.

[85] Ibid., 249.

[86] Ibid., 207-214.

[87] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 90.

[88] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* 164.

place for members of the various opposition groups available to organize. As a result, the Ayatollah would become the primary voice of the opposition initially through only a small segment of the clerical population.[89]

Bazaar merchant guilds also organized strikes and utilized their organic printing presses to mass produce handbills to generate dissent. As cassette tapes of Khomeini's anti-regime speeches began to pour across the border from Iraq in ever increasing numbers, bazaar merchants would also sell and distribute them with every purchase to customers.[90]Religious group gatherings took place in private dwellings on a weekly and monthly basis organized by wealthy *bazaar*is further propagating the message.[91] "*Bazaaris* increasingly located their mobilizing activities within mosques, which were relatively safe locations for gathering, communicating, broadcasting the government's repression, and organizing the opposition nationally through the mosque network."[92] "In the absence of any modern means of political organization and mass communication, the clergy commanded organizations that were vital to reaching the masses. With the clergy on their side, the *bazaaris* had the masses of people informed of their grievances and appealed to them for sympathy." [93]

Mobilizing the Masses to Provoke Civil Disobedience

"…not by a palace coup, not by an armed uprising, and not by an internal ethnic challenge – but nationwide labor strikes, protracted public sector slow downs, massive street demonstrations, guerilla attacks, riots, and sabotage."[94]   *Jahangir Amuzegar*

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[89] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 145.

[90] Ibid., 208.

[91] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 85.

[92] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 215.

[93] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion*, 69.

[94] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 10

Khomeini's strategy sought to build enthusiasm among faithful in preparation for the days of Tassua and Ashura into an overwhelming show of solidarity against the Shah.[95] Khomeini believed propaganda was the primary weapon available to the Revolution with Muslim students being key disseminators and actors in his psychological war against the Pahlavi regime.[96]A leader in the Liberation Movement told John Stempel that Khomeini's strategy was to create an expression of the popular will to provoke government violence against the Iranian people in order to destroy the Shah's legitimacy.[97] Shortly before Khomeini's expulsion from An Najaf, Iraq, what became known as Black Friday erupted on 8 September 1978 at Jaleh Square on the east side of Tehran. The Black Friday protests produced a series of fifteen wildcat strikes all over Iran beginning with oil refineries on the 9th of September and some forty-five strikes in October.[98] While official figures claimed only 168 Black Friday casualties, revolutionaries claimed some 3000 occurred. According to Manouchehr Ganji, when earlier protests produced no government violence, blood from freshly killed sheep provided the impression of far greater wounds dealt by the regime than had actually occurred.[99]

As the Iranian economic situation worsened, Khomeini now the chief spokesman for the multiple disparate groups seized the moment and stoked internal dissent from his exile base in Najaf. Because of the problematic flow of taped messages and pamphlets inbound from Najaf, the Shah requested Saddam Hussein expel Khomeini from Iraq in September 1978 after fourteen

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[95] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 146.

[96] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent,* 446-457.

[97] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 109.

[98] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* 77.

[99] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution,* 14.

years of exile there. After initially being refused entry into Kuwait, France offered Khomeini

entry on October 6, 1978 as a political refugee providing him asylum in Neauplhle-le-Chateau,

France.[100]

The Shah thought moving Khomeini further from his Shiite base of support might

neutralize the Ayatollah's voice. However, Khomeini's relocation to Paris only compounded the

Shah's troubles. Paris actually improved Khomeini's access to Iranians and exponentially

magnified the impact of Khomeini's propaganda message. For the first time he now possessed an

international audience and strategic reach into Iran through international news networks.[101] The

Shah's media development prior to this point now enabled 70 percent of Iranians access to

television and radio. Even Iranian villages without electricity possessed generators enabling

televisions reception of Khomeini's broadcasts.[102]

In Paris Khomeini immediately became a media icon with direct access to multiple news

agencies and now reached millions over viewers inside Iran. The increased media attention also

provided him a heightened level of international legitimacy while the Shah's legitimacy

deteriorated both among Iranians and among the international community.[103]In the first two

months in Paris, the French-Press, Associated Press, German, Austrian, Luxembourg, Swedish,

Greek, British, and American news agencies to including CBS's Mike Wallace all interviewed

Khomeini. French hotels became instant world news centers overnight.[104]Paris also provided

Khomeini with a state of art telephone communications network. This enabled him to easily and

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[100] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 124.

[101] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,*120.

[102] Ibid., 66.

[103] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 124-125.

[104] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution*, 134.

rapidly coordinate reinforcing acts of political warfare and terrorism that included: labor strikes, street demonstrations, guerilla attacks, riots, and acts of sabotage.

Undoubtedly the move to Paris made the BBC's short wave Persian radio service the opposition's primary tool in the overthrow of the Shah.[105] However, although he now possessed daily access to international media, Khomeini did not become totally reliant on big media. His bootleg small media efforts were actually intensified by continually infiltrating his propaganda cassettes and memorandums into Iran. From his chateau in Paris, two tape machines ran continuously making duplicate recordings of all his speeches and ultimatums for immediate transport to and transmission into Iran.[106] Passing through the mosque network, Khomeini's speeches were copied again and again by the thousands upon reaching their final destination.

From the fall of 1977 until his arrival in Tehran in February 1979, Khomeini's access and actual media coverage dominated all other voices in Iran. Khomeini sent some forty three messages targeting Iranians giving him greater message volume than any other political voice inside Iran.[107] In the fall of 1977, the BBC Persian service reported daily on the activities inside Iran. The coverage appeared so slanted in favor of Khomeini, the Shah considered the BBC his primary public enemy. Inadvertently, BBC broadcasts became an unwitting "extension of the opposition's communication network"...giving "the opposition movement pronouncements and version of events international legitimacy."[108] Reaching the entire Iranian population daily, the BBC projected an image of Khomeini as a **"**believer in freedom, justice, democracy, human

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[105] Ibid., 133.

[106] Ibid., 120-121.

[107] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 248.

[108] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, 102.

rights, and a social democrat."[109] Although he openly declared the intent of forming an Islamic government, Khomeini rarely discussed any details of the future nature of this political system. Instead, Khomeini portrayed himself purely as religious guide of the people with no innate desire for political office or power. This in itself provided an element of deception.[110] Khomeini had become all things to all people. He appeared a democrat to liberals and intellectuals, a religious leader to clerics, a promoter of the free market economy to the bazaar merchants, a leader of justice to leftist and workers, and the savior and protector of family values and national integrity.[111] "Khomeini had skillfully hidden his real intentions."[112] Throughout the revolutionary struggles, Khomeini advocated freedom, independence, and social justice. His establishment of a theocracy would ultimately deny basic human freedoms of all Iranians.[113] Khomeini argued Islam was progressive and far superior to democracy. Therefore discussion of democracy was not necessary. Khomeini claimed Islam valued freedom and offered justice.[114]

Khomeini addressed target audiences directly as: young people, religious students, university students, teachers, professors, journalist, workers, peasants, bazaar merchants, tradesmen, nomadic tribesmen, and deprived dwellers in slums and tents. Simultaneously, he propagated three key themes: unity, "the removal of the Shah, and the return of Khomeini."[115]

While building unity among the opposition, Khomeini speeches continually hammered away at the Shah's legitimacy, declaring it an illegal government and a puppet of the United

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[109] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution*, 36.

[110] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 245.

[111] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution*, 93.

[112] Ibid., 96.

[113] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 4.

[114] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution* , 109.
[115] Ibid., 109-118.

States.[116] On November 26, 1978 as many as one million Iranians marched protesting against the Shah in Mashhad. Smaller marches and protests also occurred in Qom, Tehran, Isfahan, and other major cities.[117] A primary tipping point occurred during the holy days of Tasu'a and Ashura when some 9 million people demonstrated shouting, "the Shah's death, Khomeini's return, and America's eviction." [118] The marches at Moharram firmly established Khomeini as the premier figure of the revolutionary cause. [119] At this point, mosques overflowed with young people standing on sidewalks outside listening to Khomeini's speeches over loudspeaker systems.[120]

Throughout his campaign against the Shah, key symbols portrayed the Shah as an octopus siphoning off the wealth of Iran. [121] Revolutionaries provoked feelings of Islamic duty by constantly weaving imagery of martyrdom throughout all events using images such as the bloody hand. Protesters identified themselves with images of Imam Husayn, slain by Yazid in the battle of Battle of Karbala which established Shia-Islam.[122] At the same time, opponents discredited the Shah by comparing him to Yazid. Similarly, propagandist characterized the Shah as Zahak, the mythical ancient ruler who killed his victims feeding their brains to snakes that protruded from his shoulders.[123] During this same period Khomeini's followers first referred to the United States

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[116] Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 457.

[117] Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 134.

[118] Ibid., 134.

[119] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 153.

[120] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 143.

[121] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution*, 126.

[122] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, 69.

[123] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 42.

as the "Great Satan." In the Iranian xenophobic mind, this painted an image of the US as a global

super power operating in accordance with the Satan's design to exert invisible will.[124]

Paralyzing the Economy, Government, and Communications

"Let him [the Shah] go and let there be a flood afterwards."[125]   *Homa Katouzian*

"In just one hundred days, protests would bring down the Iranian monarchy."[126]

However, the overwhelming majority of Iranian demonstrators really had very little

understanding as to what a future Islamic society really meant. The notion of an Islamic

government had become somewhat of a panacea that would solve all of Iran's problems. There

was very little thought of what an Islamic government would bring, instead average Iranians

focused on the utopia of an Iran without the Shah.[127]

By October 1978, the opposition was able to synchronize its message with acts of

violence so effectively the government could no longer communicate with its people. By

orchestrating simultaneous strikes and electrical power plant outages, the opposition shut off all

government broadcasting during prime time radio and television news hours.[128] Khomeini

influence over key human networks inside key government ministries and industry ultimately led

to control over the national power grid and media networks. By the time national mass media

strikes occurred from November 1978 to January 1979, Khomeini's opposition achieved total

information dominance becoming the Iranian populace's sole source of news through small

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[124] Ibid., 34.

[125] Katouzian, "The Iranian Revolution of February 1979, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington
        D.C., The Middle East Institute], 21, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed
        March 7, 2009).

[126] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran*, 1

[127] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 294.

[128] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution,* 18.

media, international channels, and short wave radio.[129] In December 1978, strikes by oil workers and the bazaar disrupted all economic activity totally paralyzing the government**.**[130] The postal system and oil industry went on strike simultaneously creating a cascade of effects. Oil dollars ceased to flow and the regime was unable to pay the government's manpower that maintained the state. Striking rank and file of government workers from individual departments also began taking orders from the opposition.[131] Ministries no longer functioned or simply did not follow the Shah's orders. With the public government controlled communication and economic system totally paralyzed everthing totally ceased to function. The Shah's strategic center of gravity, his legitimacy, had effectively been neutralized. No longer considered legitimate, the Shah had few choices except abdication of his throne. Only the armed forces still remained as a viable institution but it too was crumbling.

Pirate television stations now began operating in Tehran just prior to the Khomeini's return. Almost simultaneously, the Iranian national television network or NIRT collapsed as one of the last vestiges of the Pahlavi regime. Once the Pahlavi regime folded on 11 February 1979, the Iranian traditional media network quickly replaced small media of the Revolution and "big media" became the Ayatollah's "central weapon" system of the new Islamic Republic.[132] With the Shah's big media weapon now in his hands, Khomeini appeared nightly on Iranian television.[133]

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[129] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 161.

[130] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 242.

[131] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 147- 148.

[132] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 161-165.

[133] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 161.

Neutralizing the Iranian Military and Eliminating the SAVAK

The ideological aim of the Revolution was not just to usurp political power at any price but to try to build an Islamic state and society.[134]   *Dr. Hossein Bashiriyeh*

In war… all parts of the whole are interconnected and thus the effects produced, however small their cause, must influence all subsequent military operations and modify their final outcome… In the same way, every means must influence even the ultimate purpose.[135]   Carl Von Clausewitz

The one organ of the Shah's regime that had not collapse was the Iranian armed forces. It was also the only institution with the power to restore order. Having no army of his own, Khomeini would also have to attack the military establishment indirectly through its weaknesses and vulnerabilities. However, with the presence of the Shah the military ceased to function at this critical juncture. Although Iran possessed a professionally trained officer corps, two-thirds of the enlisted force consisted of conscripts from the lower class and rural areas. The enlisted soldiers being far more religious than their western minded officers became quickly vulnerable to Khomeini's message.[136]

As the crisis heightened, Deputy Commander of NATO, General Robert Huyser arrived unannounced in Tehran on 5 January 1979 aboard a 747 cargo jet carrying supplies for the US mission in Iran.[137] [138]Huyser hoped to forge unity among Iran's military service chiefs so a peaceful transfer of loyalty and allegiance to Bakhtair, the Shah's newly appointed prime

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[134] Bashiriyeh, Dr. Hossein, "The Islamic Revolution Derailed, The Iranian Islamic Revolution at 30," 35, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[135] Clausewitz, *On War,* 184.

[136] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution*, 31.

[137] Ibid., 160.

[138] Gholam R. Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale*, [Washington D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1985], 129.

minister, could occur.[139] Eight days later, the Shah met for the last time with his general officers

relinquishing authority to Bakhtair.[140] "Pictures of soldiers receiving flowers from the rioters,

accepting their embraces, and exchanging niceties began to mushroom in the daily papers.

Predictably, a number of officers began to look for contacts among the opposition to hedge

against unforeseen eventualities"[141] By the time the Shah named Bakhtiar has his prime minister,

desertions had already increased to as high as 1,000 per day.[142]

The Ayatollah's message on February 2nd seems to attempt counter General Huyser's

mission and simultaneously gives the allusion that nothing would change with Iran's military

establishment.

> Army commanders, do you want to be independent? Do you want to be servants
> of others? My advice to you is to enter the ranks of the people and to add your
> voices to their demand for independence…Members of the armed forces, Islam is
> better for you than unbelief, and your own nation is better for you than the
> foreigners, you should do your part by abandoning this man…officers who have
> joined us; they were treated with the upmost respect. We want our country to be
> powerful and to have strong armed forces. We do not wish to destroy our armed
> forces; we wish to preserve them so that they belong to the people and serve their
> interests, instead of being under the command and supervision of foreigners.[143]

General Qarabaghi, the Shah's top commander, believed since the Shah was departing

Iran, Iran's military interest lie in remaining entirely neutral and supporting the will of the

people.[144] When the Shah departed three days later on January 16, 1979, his entire government

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[139]Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale*, 127.

[140] Ibid., 124.

[141] Ibid., 139.

[142] Parsa, States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions, 243.

[143] Imam Khomeni, *Islam and Revolution,* [Berkeley: Mizan Press], 260.

[144] Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale,* 139.

collapsed.[145] Opposition groups suddenly appeared to suspend all differences giving the brief sense of political unity. Their common political union only encompassed the fight to overthrow the monarchy not what would follow.[146]After this point the Islamic movement, not the army, maintained all public order. The armed forces had become increasingly divided after the news of the Shah's departure.[147] Simultaneously on February 7, 1979, employees from eleven different government ministries publically transferred their loyalties to Bazargan government, Khomeini's nominee for prime minister. While this created a broad coalition politically, it led to total instability inside the armed forces.[148]

On 9 February, two days before the regime collapsed, the Ayatollah met with Generals Fardoust and Gharabaghi, who agreed to declare the army's neutrality withdrawing all forces from Iranian cities. This one decision opened the entire country to an uncontested take-over by revolutionary forces.[149] Meanwhile, Islamic leadership authorized distribution of weapons to confront the military. On the same day, a group of air force officers switched sides transferring loyalties to Khomeini and seized control of two bases inside Tehran. [150]

To influence the undecided, Khomeini proclaimed he was ready to wage *Jihad* against all army units that refused to surrender.[151] On February 10th General Qarabaghi, the Shah's top military commander, officially declared neutrality and commanded all Iranian troops to return to their posts. Without the armed forces, the Bakhtiar government collapsed. Qarabaghi's neutrality

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[145] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 141.

[146] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion*, 155.

[147] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 163.

[148] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 242.
[149] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution*, 30.

[150] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 166- 179.

[151] Ibid., 179.

decision enabled the ultimate success of the Revolution and sealed the Bakhtiar government's fate. Khomeini never intended direct confrontation with the Shah's strength; however, within hours after the declaration of neutrality revolutionaries immediately arrested many Iranian commanders.[152] Although eight hundred members of the Shah's Imperial Guard attempted to crush the rebellion, they instead suffered severe casualties. This victory only energized Khomeini's guerilla forces to storm the remaining military bases in Tehran on February 10th and 11th leading to an abrupt collapse of the rest of the armed forces. Bakhtair disappearance and Khomeini's takeover occurred simultaneously on 12 February.[153]

Upon Khomeini's return to Iran, the main effort quickly began shifting from psychological operations to physical acts of political violence in order to achieve psychological effects. Almost all of the Shah's military generals and members of SAVAK were later hunted down and executed by the Mujahidin. By 15 February, Islamic committees and Mujahidin held daily tribunals and summary executions of former regime officials, SAVAK members, and military officers.[154] While Khomeini's opposition remained weak it never attacked the military directly. However, once assured the Shah would not unleash the armed forces, Khomeini's revolutionaries "killed, maimed, dismembered, and hung" Iranian services members and also "attacked and ostracized" service member spouses and children.[155]

Although under orders from the Shah to support Bakhtiar, the generals possessed no trust for one another. So with the ultimate decision maker out of the picture, all potential for a

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[152] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution,* 40- 41.

[153] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 166.

[154] Ibid., 180-182.

[155] Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale,* 121.

cooperative counter-action was paralyzed making them easy targets for cooption by Khomeini's

divisive psychological influence. Most likely the military leadership possessed some assurances

that Khomeini would preserve the military virtually intact if they did not resist.[156] By playing on

their need to preserve their own position and the continuity of the military institution, Khomeini's

act of cooption achieved military neutrality totally disabling the Shah's operational center of

gravity. With the armed force now out of the way, Mujahidin next physically disassembled the

SAVAK, a critical capability of the Shah's security and intelligence apparatus. With no fear of

military counter-action, Mujahidin killed and captured SAVAK agents to ensure total control.

Consolidating and Usurping Power from Temporary Allies to form an Islamic Government

"This man, Bakhtiar, is not accepted by no one. The people do not accept him, the army does not accept him…"[157]   *Ayatollah Khomeini*

While still in France, Khomeini refused to meet with Bakhtair but instead demanded his

resignation after his appointment by the Shah.[158]After hailing the Shah's removal, Khomeini

immediately called on his followers to also bring down Bakhtiar's government through continued

demonstrations.[159]The National Front, a secular party revived in 1977, comprised largely of

teachers, professors, journalists, lawyers, and portions of the bazaar. Unlike Khomeini's

Islamists, the National Front never demanded the Shah's overthrow. Khomeini also co-opted key

National Front party members by placing Mehdi Bazargan initially as new prime minister of his

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[156] Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution,* 300-302.

[157] Khomeini, *Islam and the Revolution,* 259.

[158] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution,* 29.

[159] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution,* 163.

Provisional Revolutionary Government.[160] As early as October 22, Barargan had met with

Khomeini at his villa just outside Paris.[161] Although he filled his initial cabinet with other liberals,

within months, Khomeini reversed all his earlier appointments removing them by force and

resignation.[162] Divisions soon emerged exposing vast differences of opinion once the

revolutionary takeover was complete. The Liberation Movement believed itself to be the leader of

a coalition, thinking it was the primary interpreter of Khomeini's wishes in ways compatible with

the liberal democratic views of Bazargan. Eventually they realized this was not the case.[163]

When Khomeini finally flew to Tehran, over 150 embedded reporters accompanied him

on board.[164] Khomeini's false peace loving image totally captivated reporters. Even major US

news agency head-lines implied the chance for peace had finally arrived in Iran. "Many changed

their minds in following years, but nothing was likely to make them see things differently at the

time." [165]

> For those few months of euphoria after the Shah's departure, the Revolution was
> genuinely a popular Revolution, and appeared to be an authentic expression of
> the people's will. But within a short time, as the reality of what Khomeini
> intended under the heading of the Islamic Revolution began to emerge, many
> became disillusioned. Within the country, many middle class supporters fell
> away, as newspapers were closed down, women's rights were curtailed, and
> liberal politicians were marginalized and exiled. Outside the country, initial

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[160] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions*, 245.

[161] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* 3.

[162] Ibid., 145.

[163] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution ,* 129.

[164] Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad, *Small Media, Big Revolution,* 15.

[165] *Katouzian,* "The Iranian Revolution at 30, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 21,
        http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).
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support for the removal of the Shah's regime fell away, as the execution of former Shah courtiers and officers continued week after week.[166]

"Not until the first killings did the high officials of the Shah's regime begin to recognize the truth of what had happened."[167] Liberals members of the National Front naively believed Khomeini would offer them power upon his return.[168] Once Khomeini's radical Islamists firmly held the reins of power, clashes soon erupted with leftists. Terrorist bombings, arrests, torture, and executions by Islamists became the norm. Within three years, the organized left was nearly eliminated from Iran.[169] "From the viewpoint of the fundamentalists, there was not much difference between leftists, liberals, nationalists, and even the Moderate Muslims who had intellectual orientations."[170]

The new regime using political warfare and imposition of Sharia law immediately imposed the wearing of the chador, segregated beaches, and banned swim suits. Restricting social life, the regime would ban: gambling, discos, nightclubs, music, bars, alcohol, Coca-Cola, coed sports, wearing of ties, and satellite dishes. Islamic justice through imposition of Sharia law meant the hands of thieves, fingers, and legs would be chopped off; public floggings and hangings would occur; and torture of all kinds would be instituted in Iranian prisons.[171] Believing that universities were actually the bastion for communists, the new regime immediately stunted

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[166] Axworthy, Michael, *Between Pride and Disappointment, The Iranian Revolution at 30, The Iranian Revolution at 30,* [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 41. http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[167] Afkhami, *The Iranian Revolution: Thanatos on a National Scale,* 141.

[168] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution ,* 70.

[169] Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran,* 147.

[170] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 167.
[171] Ganji, *Defying the Iranian Revolution ,* 79-99.

higher education removing educational supplies and forcing student leaders and professors to stand before firing squads.[172] [173] By August 1979 Khomeini had some 40 non-Islamic opposition publications shut down and ordered all other opposition groups to disarm. The regime "defamed, accused and threatened" members of all other opposition groups and Hezbollah physically attacked the headquarters and psychologically terrorized the members of all other political groups, many of which had just supported the Shah's removal.[174] Those being the, "Islamic Peoples Republican Party, the National Front, the Tudeh Party, the National Democratic Front, and the Pan Iran Party."[175]

Once firmly in power, indirect influence totally shifted to directed violence to physically eliminate opponents. Between 1981 and 1985, Khomeini's Revolutionary Guard and Hezbollah consolidated power executing approximately 12,000 of its opponents[176] and about 100 clerics who had not cooperated were defrocked.[177] Although oil workers had largely supported Khomeini, after the overthrow some 600 oil workers were also executed in the first five years of the regime.[178] The true nature of Khomeini's Islamic government finally revealed itself and the current regime still seeks to keep the revolutionary fervor alive but cracks are appearing in veneer of the current system.

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[172] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 106,

[173] Basmenji, Kaveh, *Tehran Blues, Youth Culture in Iran,* [London: SAQI, 2005], 161.

[174] Salehi, *Insurgency through Culture and Religion,* 167.

[175] Stempel, *Inside the Iranian Revolution ,* 213.

[176] Parsa, *States, Ideologies, and Social Revolutions,* 250.

[177] Ibid., 133.

[178] Ibid., 172.

Cracks in the Iranian System: Conditions Today

"If we lose the hearts and minds of the young, we're finished. We cannot control them."
Abdollah Nouri, Former Vice President and Former Minister of Interior[179]

Today systemic socio-economic fissures similar to those of the 1970s exist in the current Iranian system. These conditions are both manmade and natural, involving economic, political, social, psychological, and communications related problems. Such conditions make the current Iranian regime psychologically vulnerable to indirect attack by its internal and external opposition. Vulnerabilities in associated conditions appear in four interrelated psychological factors of perception, motivation, stress, and attitudes.[180]

Oil Based Economic Dependency and Overspending

Although today's regime claims to have improved the lives of the masses, the Iranian economy has performed poorly since the Revolution. This is primarily a result of an oil based economy that still provides 80 percent of the state's revenue.[181] When the recent world wide drop in oil prices occurred, Iran's economy was drastically impacted. Not unlike the Shah, Mahmud Ahmadinejad's exorbitant, uncontrolled spending habits have also fueled Iran's rapid economic decline. Although possibly sustainable while oil prices remained high, Ahmadinejad's overspending has driven the entire Iranian economy into deep recession. When oil peaked at $150 a barrel, the Iranian government spent the windfall, projecting budgets anticipating continued highs with little planning for the effects of a potential price drop. Iran now finds itself in a

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[179] Elaine Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*, 274.

[180] *FM 33-1-1, Psychological Operations Tactics Techniques and Procedures,Glossary-10.*

[181] Khosravi, Shahram *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008], 7.

precarious financial situation, especially if oil prices continue to decline to the $30 to $40 a barrel range for a year or more. The dramatic loss of oil revenue produced catastrophic effects, and now forces the regime to rely on higher taxation of its populace. These economic impacts have resulted in a decrease of real per-capita income and an imbalance in income distribution. Also like the pre-revolutionary period, oil production has also dropped 30 percent while Iranian dependency on oil revenues has risen. Although the regime attempts to hide the facts, Iranian unemployment has skyrocketed with rates currently at 25 percent among working age Iranians and 50 percent of all 25 to 29 year olds in 2007. Also reminiscent of the Shah's demise, inflation rates have climbed close to 30 percent and food prices to 35 percent.[182] Coupled with a $50 billion dollar deficit, lower oil prices have compressed Iran's economy making Iran more vulnerable than ever to economic sanctions.[183]

So long as oil prices remained in the $60 range or higher, the regime had to pay little attention to governmental reform because the regime relied very little on taxation of its people. However, the sudden drop in oil prices may force greater taxation of the Iranian population and the business class. The bazaar has historically possessed the capacity to challenge regime power. Even when support of the clergy, students, and intelligentsia did not exist, *bazaaris* have often confronted tyrannical rule to protect their collective interests. Recently when the Iranian government attempted to impose a new value added tax (VAT), the *bazaaris* adamantly resisted the measures with massive closures of the bazaars in Isfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz, Tabriz, and

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[182] Hossein Askari, "Obama's Options on Iran,*"* http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-askari13-2008dec13,0,7386002.story, December 13, 2008 (accessed March 9, 2009).

[183] Bahman Bakitari, "Iranian Society: A Surprising Picture, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 82. http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

Tehran. After thirty years of cooperation with the government, *bazaaris* did an about-face conducting totally coordinated strikes reminiscent of the Revolution. The regime immediately responded by sending security forces to break up the strikes. State run newspapers branded *bazaaris* and their activities as "an anti-national movement," "wealthy leech like people," and "smugglers."[184]

Rising unemployment, inflation, cost of housing, food prices, growing government debt, and environmental pollution all create growing stress related vulnerabilities associated with all Iranian citizens and its business sector. The Iranian government's over reliance on oil based revenues also exacerbates these same stresses. As oil prices fall the government must transition from oil based revenue to taxation of its populace and businesses. This shift in tax revenues will only create the potential for fissures to emerge between a traditionally supportive bazaar, clerics, and political leadership.

Internally a large majority already views the Iranian political and clerical leadership as corrupt and incompetent. Perceptions related vulnerabilities include: economic mismanagement and corruption, social and religious oppression, long term environmental damage, and resultant cultural, educational, and political isolation.

Hegemonic Desires and the increasing Militarization of Iranian Politics

Today political contradiction and increasing militarization of the traditional theocracy characterizes Iranian politics and its policies. Because Iran seeks to be the dominant regional

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[184] Dr. Arang Keshavarzian, "Back to the Future: Bazaar Strikes, Three Decades after the Revolution, Media, and Popular, in Post-revolutionary Iran, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 98. http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

power, the regime desires the accompanying international respect and recognition in order to legitimize such a position. Thus all statecraft and negotiations, supported by threats, direct military, economic, or diplomatic pressures become highly unproductive because they run against the grain of the Iranian psyche the yearns for respect.[185] At the same time, Iranian foreign policy always remains highly contradictory. While Iran condemns Jihadist terrorism, the regime also shelters al-Qaeda fugitives; while Iran says it is a force for regional stability, the regime calls for the total destruction of Israel and supports insurgents in Iraq.[186]

In contrast, Iranian public diplomacy projects an image of Iran as a responsible political and economic partner seeking a nuclear program entirely for peaceful purposes.[187] Iran bolsters its image and support for suspect nuclear programs through relations world-wide with some 118 different Non-Aligned Members (NAM).[188] Most alarming, potential achievement of Iranian nuclear desires may very well upset the delicate Middle East military balance influencing Turkish, Saudi, and Egyptian regional powers to seek their own nuclear deterrent resulting in an arms race.

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[185] R.K. Ramazani, "Understanding Iranian Foreign Policy, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 13, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[186] Hossein S. Seifzadeh, "Culture and the Range of Options in Iran's International Politics, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 129, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[187] Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors,* 370.

[188] Bidjan Nashat, "Iran's Tactical Foreign Policy Rhetoric, The Iranian Revolution at 30,"[Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 140, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

To overcome growing strategic isolation, Iran attempts to extend its security perimeter into Lebanese and Palestinian territories.[189] This Iranian strategy in the Levant largely precipitated the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war over Lebanon. So, as a Syrian-Iranian alliance becomes increasingly visible, Iran finds itself at odds not only "with the United States and Israel, but also…Sunni Arab states such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia that fear a Shia-axis."[190] Concerning Iraq, Iran continues to maintain its presence and influence primarily for two reasons. Iran seeks "to create a stable and unified Iraq" but also wants to ensure Iraq becomes an Islamic Republic adhering to the Iranian model.[191]

Internally, Iran's traditional revolutionaries like Ahmandinejad fear modern reformists. To counter potential reformist influence, retired Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) and the Basij militia members are becoming a primary social base among the new political elite. Although outside Khomeini's original design and intent of clerical rule and domination, former IRGC members now control nearly third of parliamentary seats. This growing militarization of the theocracy is by design to counter balance the influence of potential reformists.[192] This growing theocratic rift may cause increasing distrust inside the Iranian government making it vulnerable to dysfunction and internal strife.

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[189] Bidjan Nashat, "Iran's Tactical Foreign Policy Rhetoric, The Iranian Revolution at 30,"139, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[190] Raymond Hinnebusch, "The Syrian-Iranian Alliance, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 15, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[191] Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors,* 371.

[192] Dr. Hossein Bashiriyeh, "The Islamic Revolution Derailed, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 3, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).
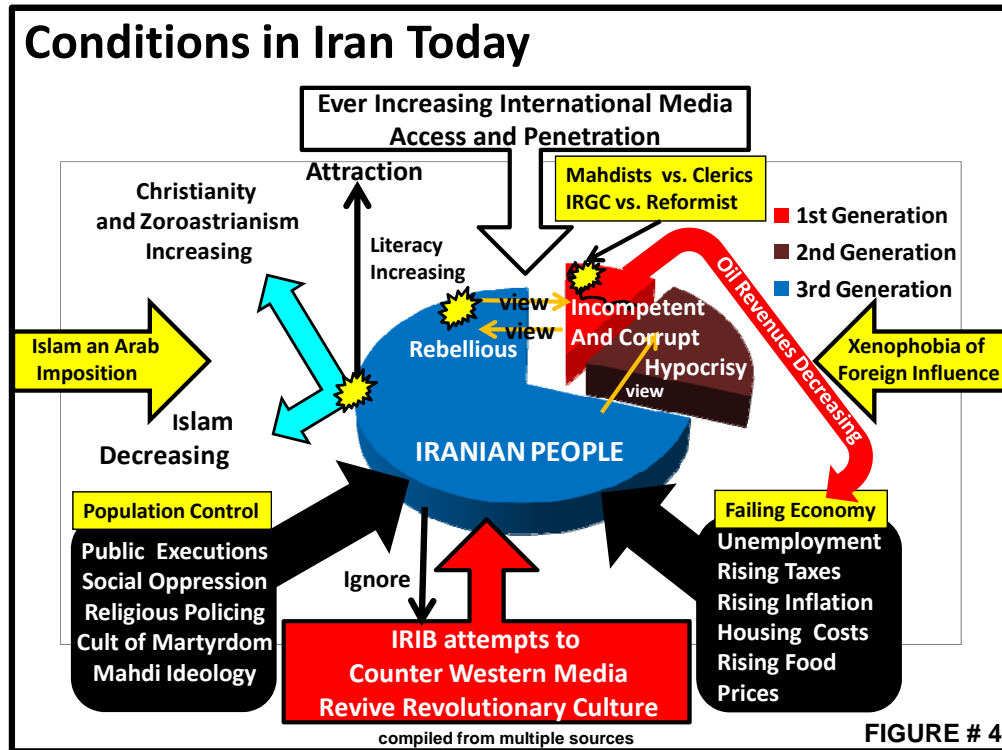.

Conditions in Iran Today

Ever Increasing International Media Access and Penetration

Attraction

Christianity and Zoroastrianism Increasing

Islam an Arab Imposition

Islam Decreasing

Literacy Increasing

Mahdists vs. Clerics IRGC vs. Reformist

1st Generation
2nd Generation
3rd Generation

view

Incompetent And Corrupt

Rebellious

Hypocrisy view

Oil Revenues Decreasing

Xenophobia of Foreign Influence

IRANIAN PEOPLE

Population Control

Public Executions
Social Oppression
Religious Policing
Cult of Martyrdom
Mahdi Ideology

Ignore

IRIB attempts to Counter Western Media Revive Revolutionary Culture

Failing Economy

Unemployment
Rising Taxes
Rising Inflation
Housing Costs
Rising Food
Prices

compiled from multiple sources

FIGURE # 4

Figure 4: Conditions in Iran Today[193]

The Interwoven Knot of the Persian, Iranian, and Islamic Psyche

"Psychological dislocation is temporary; spiritual dislocation is permanent."[194]

Brigadier General S. K. Malik

In Iran spiritual, psychological, and social factors form a tightly woven knot like the back of a Persian rug. So effects in the economic or social arenas often cause second and third order effects in the psychological dimension or vice versa. One of the primary factors impacting the overall Iranian psyche resides in the deep rooted beliefs and teachings of the coming of the Mahdi. The Shia believe the 12th Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi or Hidden Imam, went into hiding

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[193] Author, Figure 4: Conditions in Iran Today, depicted by the author and derived from multiple sources.

[194] Malik, *The Quranic Concept of War,* 60.

in 874 AD near the city of Samarra, Iraq and will someday return.[195] [196]This belief of a messianic figure also appears in Zoroastrian beliefs, Persian literature, and poetry from the book of kings, portraying the appearance of a man who spreads the religion of god to the four corners of the earth.[197] The Shia believe the Mahdi will lead the faithful in a final battle between good and evil. The good, according to the Shia, consists of all those who ascribe to Shia-Islam, while evil includes believers of all other faiths with Jews and Christians topping the list of the Mahdi's enemies. Adherers to Mahdism believe the Mahdi will install a one world government upon his return filling the earth with justice. Most significantly, they believe Jesus will accompany the Mahdi in world conquest. Commonly held beliefs by both Shia and Sunnis claim the Mahdi descends directly from the Prophet Mohammad and upon his return he will rule for 7 years leading an era of world peace. [198] Wars and plagues will precede his return and the Black Standard in Khursan will be raised. Arabs will throw foreigners out of their lands but great conflict will totally destroy Syria. Death and fear will terrorize the inhabitants of Baghdad and Iraq and fire will appear in the sky.[199]

After the Iranian Revolution, Khomeini intentionally incorporated tenets of Mahdism into Iran's system of governance, making him the Mahdi's official representative on earth. Today, Ahmandinejad continues as the primary self appointed proponent of Mahdism within Iran. In

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[195] Mohebat Ahdiyyih, "Ahmadinejad and the Mahd,"[Middle East Quarterly, Fall 2008], 27-37. http://www.meforum.org/1985/ahmandinejad-and-the-mahdi, (accessed March 2, 2009).

[196] Thomas Erdbrink, "Ahmadinejad Criticized for Saying Long-Ago Imam Mahdi Leads Iran," [The Washington Post,] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/07/AR2008050703587.html, May 8, 2008, pg. A13 (accessed March 2, 2009).

[197] Ahdiyyih, "Ahmadinejad and the Mahdi," The Middle East Quarterly, (accessed March 2, 2009).

[198] Mahdi, Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahdi, (accessed March 2, 2009).

[199] Ibid.

2005, Ahmandinejad sponsored the first ever conference on Mahdism doctrine in Tehran. This forum portrayed Mahdism as its own ideology and claimed Mahdism could form the basis for world peace, enabling unity among the world's religions.[200] Likewise, Ahmandinejad fills his cabinet with like-minded Mahdi believers such as Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi. As an Ayatollah and Mahdist, Mesbah-Yazdi, exhibits great influence over Ahmandinejad, other key members of government, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), and the security forces. Mesbah-Yazdi advocates the use of violence, argues the superiority of Islam over all other religions, and calls on all Muslims to wage war against unbelievers to prepare for the return of the Mahdi.[201]

Regarding the nuclear question, Mesbah-Yazdi adamantly supports Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. Mesbah-Yazdi believes Iran must acquire nuclear weapons so they can strike terror in the hearts of their enemies. Although the current supreme leader, Khamenei, issued a fatwa declaring nuclear weapons contrary to Islamic teaching, Mesbah-Yazdi in contrast, claimed there were no such religious constraints on the use of nuclear weapons for retaliation.[202]

Most disturbing to many Iranian clerics, Ahmandinejad claimed the hidden Imam already leads Iran and believes he can hasten the return of the Mahdi.[203] In an address on July 1, 2008, he claimed the Lord of the Age, the Mahdi, would make his appearance in two years. Rumors abound that Ahmandinejad has now usurped Khameni's legitimacy.[204]Ahmandinejad's constant

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[200] Ahdiyyih, "Ahmadinejad and the Mahdi," The Middle East Quarterly, (accessed March 2, 2009)**.**

[201] Ibid.

[202] Ibid.

[203] Thomas Erdbrink, "Ahmadinejad Criticized for Saying Long-Ago Imam Mahdi Leads Iran," [The Washington Post,] May 8, 2008, pg. A13 (accessed March 2, 2009).

[204] Ahdiyyih, "Ahmadinejad and the Mahdi," The Middle East Quarterly, (accessed March 2, 2009)

use of the Mahdi in his speeches has led to strong criticism by clerics and other members of the Iranian parliament. Many believe his words and actions actually invite conflict thus endangering the survival of the Islamic Republic.[205] Some Iranian clerics have said Ahmandinejad uses comments concerning the hidden imam only to silence internal government criticism and to justify his own policies.[206] Although traditionally rifts existed between reformers and hard-liners, now differences give the impression of internal rifts between Mahdists and the clerical establishment making the regime vulnerable to more internal strife and mistrust.

Another key element affecting the regime and collective Iranian psyche involves the psychological dimension of past invasions and oppression by foreign powers. Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, Turks, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq all invaded Iran. Both the British and Russian governments previously possessed great economic and political influence over Iran and both invaded and occupied Iranian territory in two World Wars.[207] For the Iranian mind-set, like most middle-eastern cultures, the past is present and the Iranian psychological make-up carries many paradoxes. While they feel victimized, Iranians also consider themselves as superior and sort of cultural center of the universe or cross roads between east and west. This sense of superiority stems from the grandeur of the Persian Empire, simultaneously they harbor a sense of inferiority due to their historical subjugation.[208]

When the Revolution occurred, Iranians finally felt in control of their own destiny. This, however, did not eradicate a national sense of victimization. Today 30 years of regime

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[205] Ibid.

[206] Thomas Erdbrink, "Ahmadinejad Criticized for Saying Long-Ago Imam Mahdi Leads Iran," The Washington Post, May 8, 2008, pg. A13 (accessed March 2, 2009).

[207] Ramazani, 'Understanding Iranian Foreign Policy, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 12, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[208] Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors,* 338.

propaganda leads many Iranians to view the United States as the chief manipulator responsible for Iran's problems.[209] US involvement in orchestration of the counter-coup of Mossedeq of 1953 remains firmly etched in the collective Iranian conscience in the same manner as the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979 characterizes our views of Iran.[210]Paradoxically, Iranian youth love and desire American culture and all it encompasses.

This combined xenophobia and the Iranian youth's attraction to all things western, fuels Ahmadinejad's mindset to label any mentioning of Iran or Persia in western media as an instrument of psychological warfare. Also since the Shah's removal largely involved the use of psychological warfare, the current regime remains ever vigilant and increasingly paranoid; the notion of such a repeat performance strikes fear in the hearts of current regime leadership. Any prospect that Ahmadinejad or other regime leadership can divorce themselves from their own cultural lens remains doubtful. Since all Iranian media exists for the explicit purpose of government orchestrated propaganda, this view dominates Iranian thinking when looking at foreign media. A prime example: when Hollywood produced the movie 300 about the repulsion of the Persian army at the Battle of Thermopylae by 300 Spartan warriors, Ahmandinejad immediately labeled the film a product of US psychological warfare targeting the Iranian culture.[211]

A dominant feature of the regime's Shia culture involves a continual focus on martyrdom. Over 1,400 streets in Tehran bare the names of martyrs. Iranian holidays focus

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[209] Ibid., 342.

[210] Ramazani, "Understanding Iranian Foreign Policy, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 12, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[211]Kimberly, West, "Iran Condemns Blockbuster Movie 300 as American Psychological Warfare," www.associatedcontent.com/article/178732/iran_condemns_blockbuster_movie_300, March 14, 2007. (accessed March 7, 2009).

almost entirely on celebrating mourning and martyrdom of the Prophet, Imams, or Revolutionary

personalities.[212] The focus on martyrdom serves as a primary regime tool for population control

through imposition of a sense of guilt and duty for Islam.

However, after thirty years of endless "propaganda and indoctrination" by the Islamic

Republic, the regime has instead "produced a generation more distanced than ever from both

religion and politics."[213] The state's primary propaganda target is its youth with the specific intent

of countering the western cultural invasion of Iranian society. As a counter-model, the Iranian

government projects the Basij as an example of faith, martyrdom, modesty, self-restraint,

selflessness, and self sacrifice for Islam and the Revolution for the Iranian youth. As did

Khomeini, the regime still politicizes Ashura as a vehicle to produce social cohesion and revival

of Islamic values of faith, martyrdom, sacrifice, and dignity. It also still uses the Battle of Karbala

between Hussein and Yazidi as the symbol of the ultimate fight between all things good and evil.

Meanwhile religious police roam the streets; they willfully punish anyone, with as many as 74

lashes, involved in: distribution of paintings, drawings, text, pictures, publications, signs, films,

or cassettes, harmful to Islam's definition of ethics. Instead of being disinterested, Iranian youth

hunger more for all things western: fashion, clothes, music, satellite radio and television

programming, and internet access.[214]

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[212] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 52-53.

[213] Basmenji, Kaveh, *Tehran Blues, Youth Culture in Iran,* 61-62.
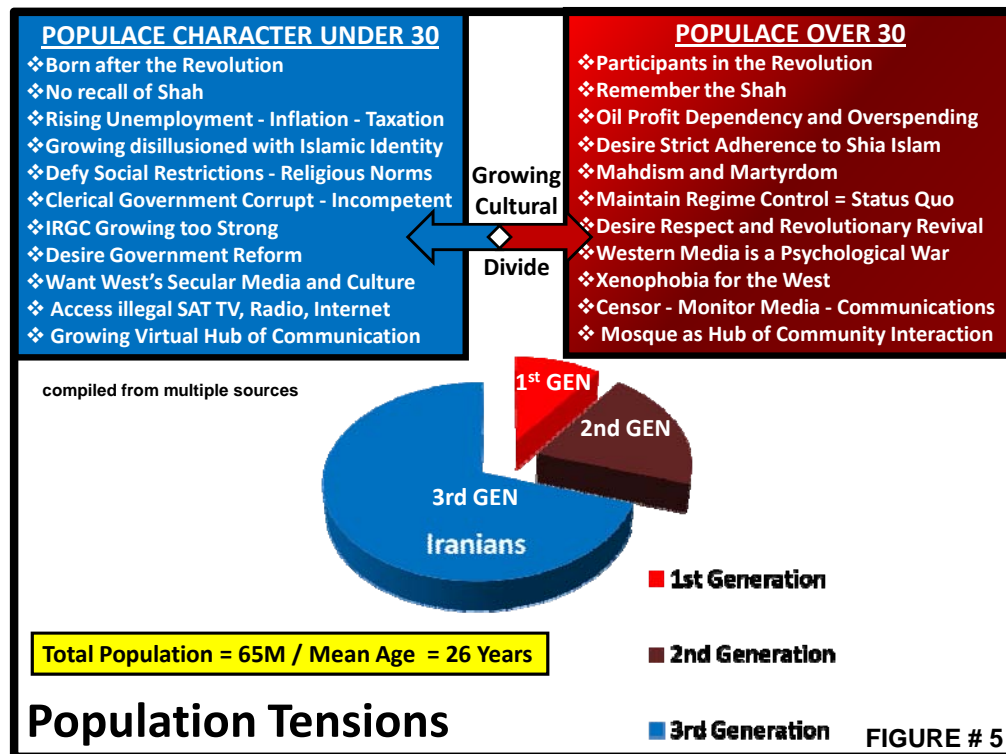
[214] Ibid., 19-20.

Figure 5: Population Tensions[215]

This endless oppression and propaganda has now culminated in a dramatic erosion of the

Iranian Islamic ideology among Iran's youth. In a survey conducted by the Ministry of Islamic

Guidance, a sample of some 16,824 Iranians found:

> a decline in religious beliefs and practices especially among the new generation; growing secularization of private life; increasing use of cultural products prohibited by the ruling clergy; growing political distrust and cynicism; decline in the feelings of social solidarity; widespread feelings of political inefficacy.[216]

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[215] Author, Figure 5: Population Tensions, depicted by the author from multiple sources.

[216] Bashiriyeh, Dr. Hossein, "The Islamic Revolution Derailed, The Iranian Islamic Revolution at 30," 38. http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

Social Tensions and Oppression Fuel Generational Abandonment of Islam

> Iran's Revolution may have destroyed an old order and created a new one, but a generation later a greater battle is raging like nothing seen since its early days. It is a battle not over control of territory but for the soul of the nation. [217]
> Elaine Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors*

Iranian society truly no longer reflects its revolutionary character but now consists of three distinct generations which increasingly results in a social tug of war between the youthful populace and its government. Those who created the Revolution, the first generation comprise the minority. Today, it is becoming increasingly apparent the revolutionary generation has not successfully replicated its religious fervor and nationalism in younger generations. At the time of the Revolution the first generation members were twenty years old or older. The revolutionary experience united them. The second generation, all in their early teens in 1979, became united by the experience of the Iran-Iraq War from 1980 to 1988. Simultaneously, this generation has provided the largest portion of expatriates escaping Iran in the 1980s. The third generation consists of those currently under age 30. They possess absolutely no memory of the Revolution or of the Shah. Unlike the other two generations, the third generation grew up entirely under the rule of the Islamic Republic. This generation now makes up 70 percent of the total population as a result of Ayatollah Khomeini's mandate to make child bearing a national duty.[218] The second and third order effects of Khomeini's mandate are just now becoming apparent as third generation members born after the Revolution now totally dominate Iranian society.[219]

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[217] Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors,* 5.

[218] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 5, 138-139.

[219] Mehdi Semati, "Communication, Media, and Popular, in Post-revolutionary Iran, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 77, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

The majority of the third generation desire cultural and political change; they are increasingly unemployed, depressed and detached from traditional Islamic society. This generation comprises 100 percent of all high school and college age students as well as young workers below the age of 30. This demographic shift is embodies a drastic transition in the mindset of the people. Ten years ago, with over 1.5 million students enrolled in Iranian universities they became the largest source of potential mobilization. Just two years ago, "in December 2006, students burned pictures of the President Ahamadinejad and interrupted his speech with "Death to the dictator."[220]This young generation, the majority, is falling away from the tenets of Islamic society imposed by Khomeini exponentially. They push the envelope of defiance: "eating ice-cream on the street during Ramadan, playing illicit music in the car, showing more hair or skin than allowed, just being in the wrong place at the wrong time."[221] The third generation members view their second generation parents as hypocrites because of their passive submission to regime social oppression in public while leading contradictory life styles in private. Unlike their parents, the third generation feels no compulsion to follow mandated Islamic traditions of the regime with unquestionable loyalty. [222] The differences cause growing generational tensions.

In contrast to the revolutionary period when young Iranians shifted away from secularism towards Islam, the socio-religious pendulum is now swinging dramatically back in the opposite direction. The emerging paradigm shift increases tensions among Iran's three main generations, as young Iranians attitudes describe Islam as a religion that offers only emptiness, legalism,

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[220] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 140-141.

[221] Ibid., 125.

[222] Ibid., 124.

oppression, and social constraints. "[They] are asking [their] parents why they stood for such a revolution, for such a religion."[223] Young Iranians also seem bored with Islam. Most alarming to the regime, some "75 percent of the total population and 86 percent of students no longer practice Islam" causing an "epidemic of abandoning faith" which increases anxiety among Islamic clerics.[224] *The third generation is not only abandoning the Islamic faith, they could be characterized as having no faith in anything.*[225] Unlike the Ayatollah's vision for Iran, today many youth possess the attitude or perception that Arabs actually usurped Persian native culture by the introduction and imposition of Islam on Iran in the eighth century, producing an increasing affinity for traditional non-Islamic pagan religions such as Zoroastrianism which originated in ancient Persia. Also accompanying this, a growing disgust for the teaching of Arabic has emerged. Today Iranian youth consider Persian as more superior and English far more useful than learning Arabic.[226]

As the spiritual void widens the youngest Iranian generation increasingly vacate Islam in search of spiritual life, truth and internal peace in other faiths. Christianity increasingly finds fertile ground inside Iran. At the time of the Revolution statistics projected as few as 500 Christians living inside Iran, but the number of Christian converts exploded to 400 times that number by the year 2000. Opposing this threat, the regime openly persecutes, tortures, or even kills Christians. President Ahmadinejad has vowed to destroy the growing clandestine Christian church inside Iran. While bootleg copies of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* circulate on

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[223] CBN News Reporter, "Inside Iran: A Rising Chorus," Christian World News,http://www.cbn.com/CBNnews/474183.aspx, (accessed March 9, 2009).

[224] Shahram Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 126.

[225] Ibid., 126.

[226] Ibid., 166-167.

Iranian streets, Christian radio, satellite television, and websites now freely penetrate Iran.[227] Although down played by the regime, both Christianity's and Zoroastrianism's exponential growth affects the once traditional homogenous religious character of the Islamic Republic as more and more young Iranians seek spiritual life, truth and inner peace elsewhere.

When questioned what they desire, most young Iranians want an end to public humiliation, condemnation, and social oppression. They desire educational, social, and cultural exchange opportunities, modern conveniences and personal freedom. Emotionally, young Iranians feel totally left behind when exposed to the outside world.[228] In all these social arenas the current leadership flunks. Regime human rights record since the Revolution is strongly negative. Since 1979, public figures have been harassed, beaten, imprisoned; candidates for office who were permitted to run in elections are many times rejected by regime authorities; "armed thugs search homes, places of work, classrooms, and open assembly venues to wreak havoc" in support of Islamic principles of jurist prudence.[229] Because the growing secular nature of the third generation run completely counter to revolutionary principles, increasingly possibilities exist for internal clashes between various elements of Iranian society.

Being Transformed by Communications and Emerging Virtual Networks

Possibly nothing threatens Iran's totalitarian theocracy more than the increasing penetration levels of foreign mass communications. Because of this, the Islamic Republic now

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[227] Joel C., Rosenberg, *Epicenter,* Carol Stream, Illinois: [Tyndale House Publishers, 2006], 216-221

[228] Sciolino, *Persian Mirrors,* 293.

[229] Akhavi Shahakrough, *"*The Iranian Revolution 30 Years On, The Iranian Revolution at 30," [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 24, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

finds it more difficult than ever to reconstruct the collective revolutionary Islamic identity. A regime primary weapon to counter this foreign influence includes the IRIB or (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) controlled by the Supreme Leader. IRIB provides production and distribution of content for 7 television channels and 14 radio networks domestically, and regional and international television and radio programming in 27 languages. IRIB produces "entertainment, news, public affairs, and sports reflecting the official views of the state."[230] Young Iranians, however, usually ignore state run media in favor of foreign alternatives.[231]

Much like the pre-revolutionary period, literacy rates have continued to improve among Iranians. Literacy rates increased from 47.8 to 91.5 percent among females and from 71.2 to 97.8 percent among males from 1976 to 1996.[232] Simultaneously, mass communications penetration level increased with CNN International, the Bloomberg channels, Persian-language BBC TV, Voice of America, and Radio Israel now reaching almost every Iranian household with the latter three being the most popular among Iranians. [233] [234]Although officially banned, illegal satellite television dishes provide instant access to over half of Iran's 66 million citizens. [235] This enables viewing of more than 100 American television channels exposing Iranian viewers to current American TV shows and trends.[236] Some 80 percent of Iranians also now own video-cassette

[230] Semati Mehdi , "Communication, Media, and Popular, in Post-revolutionary Iran, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 77, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[231]Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 174.

[232]Basmenji, *Tehran Blues, Youth Culture in Iran,* 37.

[233]Semati, "Communication, Media, and Popular, in Post-revolutionary Iran, The Iranian Revolution at 30,"78., http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009)

[234] Khosravi,Young and Defiant in Tehran, 57.

[235]Niusha, Zeighami, "Satellite Dish, Iran (Persia) Virtual Museum Project," http://ivmp.wordpress.com/2007/11/18/satellite-dish/, (accessed March 9, 2009).

[236] Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 156.

recorders (VCR) and US films purchased through the black-market. Telephone access has also improved with some estimates predicting that by next year approximately 50 percent of all Iranians will own at least one cellular phone.[237] In sharp contrast to the revolutionary period, satellite TV, radio, internet, cellular telephones, VCRs, and DVD media did not even exist. While Iranians possess a xenophobic fear of foreign intervention and exploitation, concurrently, attitudes of the largest segment of the population favor penetration of all things western into Iran: western goods, culture, music, media, education, and styles.
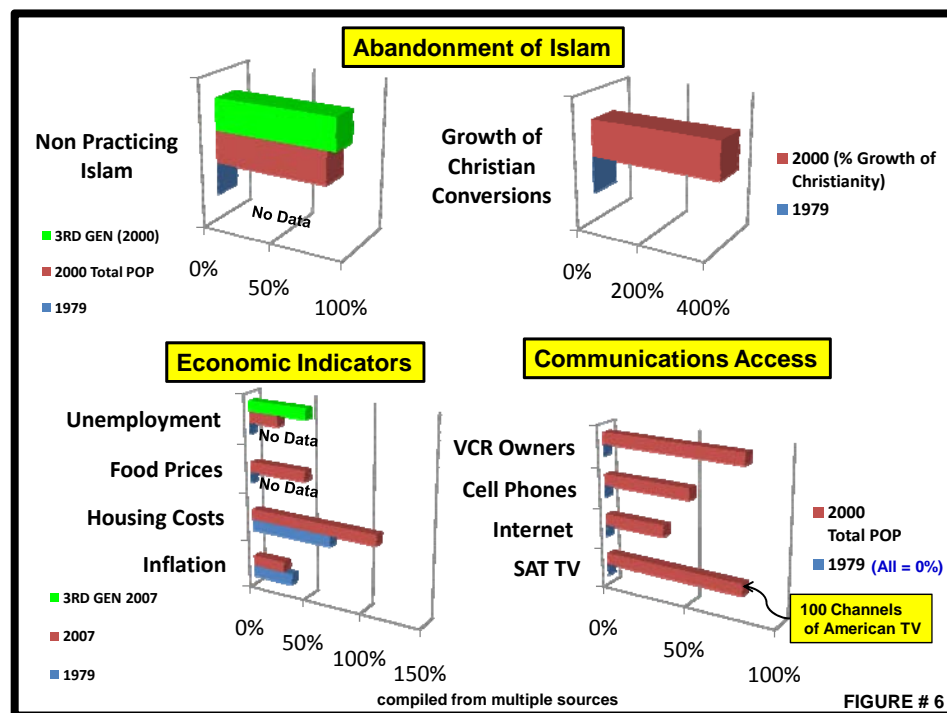

Figure 6: Abandonment of Islam – Economic Indicators – Communication Access[238]

[237] Semati, "Communication, Media, and Popular, in Post-revolutionary Iran, The Iranian Revolution at 30," 78, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[238] Author, Figure 6: Abandonment of Islam, Economic Indicators, Communication Access, depicted by the author from multiple sources.

While the mosques once provided the primary place to freely share ideas during the Revolution, the internet has now become the new discourse space for the Iranian middle class and its third generation. Some 1,500 cyber cafes operate in Tehran alone and over half of the 65 million Iranian Internet users are under the age of 25.[239] Pirated software, CDs, videos, and computer games which might cost $1,500 in America can be purchased for as little as $10 on Iranian streets. Iranians are also the biggest users of email across the entire Middle East, raising Farsi to the fourth largest language among internet bloggers world-wide and providing access for open discussion of any topic. [240] [241]

The Future Increasingly Challenges Military Indoctrination and Loyalties

Like the revolutionary period, the information environment also stresses the loyalties of modern the Iranian military. Today, Iran's armed forces consist of a regular air force, navy, and army as well as a dual military structure called the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC, or *Pasdaran*. The IRGC also includes air, naval, and army forces. Khomeini originally formed the IRGC as the primary force to ensure the regime's continued existence. In 1992, Iran created a joint armed forces general staff to ensure integration of the regular armed forces with the Pasdaran at the highest command levels. While the mission of regular armed forces involves the conventional defense of Iran, the IRGC mission involves internal security and exportation of revolutionary ideas. Within the IRGC, the Quds Force or Jerusalem force, controlled solely by the Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, serves as the primary tool export the revolution. The Al Quds

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[239] Basmenji, Kaveh, *Tehran Blues, Youth Culture in Iran,* 54-56.

[240] Sciolino, Elaine, *Persian Mirrors,* 44.

[241] Khosravi, *Young and Defiant in Tehran,* 157-158.

force regularly conduct operations inside Iraq infiltrating Iranian made explosives to Iraqi insurgents and to Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. [242]

Also important to regime survival, the Basij, comprised of male and female volunteers as young as 12 years of age, possess about 90,000 members on active service. Mobilization estimates of the Basij range between 1 million to 11 million. The Basij conduct riot control, internal security, and they police Islamic moral infractions and augment the IRGC in war time.[243]

Possibly observing a breakdown in revolutionary ideals and discipline, Khamenei called for a new indoctrination of all IRGC personnel in 2008. This consists of four main pillars: religious principles, total obedience to the supreme leader, individual character that epitomizes the Revolution, and fellowship in the people's army. However, this indoctrination forms a direct contradiction with original revolutionary principles. Can the IRGC be a loyal people's army and simultaneously possess absolute obedience to Khamenei? Because rural Iranians historically dominated IRGC enlisted ranks, recruitment for the IRGC is becoming more problematic in the future. Today the traditionally more religious rural dwellers now migrate increasingly to the cities. This migration increasingly exposes rural Iran youth to secular influences. Over time the available recruiting pool of the fanatically religious may shrink dramatically.[244]

Today the IRGC controls both the Iranian ballistic missiles and regime nuclear weapons programs. These two facts make the IRGC the current center of gravity within the armed

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[242] Matthew M. Frick, "Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, An Open Source Analysis," Joint Forces Quarterly, www.ndupress.ndu.edu, Issue 49, 2nd Quarter 2008 (accessed February 28, 2009), 123.

[243] Ibid., 123.

[244] Ali Alfoneh, "Indoctrination of the Revolutionary Guards," [Middle Eastern Outlook], www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.29424/pub_detail.asp, February 20, 2009 (accessed March 1, 2009).

forces.[245] As mentioned previously, the further militarization of Iranian politics by former IRGC actually defies Khomeini's original intent for clerical rule and also weakens over all civilian control of the military.[246] Possibly the regime sees the handwriting on the wall, in ten years the nonconforming third generation will control all leadership within the entire military, full colonel and below. The growing secularization husbanded with dwindling religious fervor for Islam will increasingly shape negative popular attitudes towards IRGC or Basij service.

Applications to Strategy

How do revolutionary lessons and current vulnerabilities apply to strategy? "US policy since the Revolution…vacillated between containment and regime change."[247] Ken Pollack, the author of Persian Mirrors, claims that two clocks are actually ticking in Iran. One clock involves Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons and the other clock involves regime change. According to Pollack, the US should focus on the regime change clock.[248] In recent years US focus has been on how to delay, postpone, or prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons. Considering the nuclear club, has any nation ever been prevented from eventually joining this group if the goal was continuously pursued? It does not appear so.

US and allied strategies to prevent Iranian acquisition of nuclear weapons have actually played on traditional Iranian xenophobic fears of physical foreign invasion. So this only makes Iranian leadership more adamant about its WMD pursuits. Such approaches, either diplomatic or

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[245] Frick, "Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," JFQ, 121,126.

[246] Alfoneh, "Indoctrination of the Revolutionary Guards," [Middle Eastern Outlook].

[247] Farideh Farhi, The Revolutionary Legacy: A Contested and Insecure Polity, The Iranian Revolution at 30, [Washington D.C., The Middle East Institute], 30-31, http://www.mideasti.org/files/Iran_Final.pdf, (accessed March 7, 2009).

[248] Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, 388.

military, directly attack Iranian strengths head to head. While we should never consider the current leadership as rational actors, if WMD acquisition occurs, we should make it perfectly clear that any attempted employment of Iranian WMD will bring swift retaliation in kind.

Any strategy for Iran must instead capitalize on existing Iranian propensities, perceptions, motivations, stresses, attitudes and internal tensions. The re-emergence of a growing dissatisfied populace, failing economy, and unraveling of the Iranian ideology, makes the indirect approach through the psychological dimension all the more logical. Because Iran believes all western media are state run and directed towards its demise, the large volume of mass communication available to Iran makes hiding information designed for such efforts relatively simple. A strategy that seeks to build internal dissent in order to cause Iran to focus internally; build internal pressure for reform; and potentially produce populace-led regime change, may be the most viable option. Reinforced by diplomatic, military, and economic means, such a strategy may prove highly effective in achieving long term strategic and regional goals and objectives.

Conclusion

The day will come when the exhilarating dawn of freedom will embrace the lives of the Iranian people: Freedom of expression, freedom of belief, freedom of religion, freedom of the press and freedom of clothing….The day will come when life in the hell the mullahs have created will give way to life in a democratic society, so that everyone would have the right to part take in decisions about the most important political affairs of society; And, when the right to change the government is respected.[249]   *Maryam Rajavi*

The indirect approach using psychological operations to target Iranian audiences through key vulnerabilities and networks possesses applicability for strategies today. Thirty years after the

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[249] Maryam Rajavi, "Iran Maryam Rajavi's speech in gathering of 70,000 Iranians in Paris," http://ncr-iran.org/content/view/5348/1/, Wednesday, 02 July 2008, (accessed March 7, 2009).

Revolution, the socio-economic conditions in Iran increasingly mirror those of revolutionary period as the current economic down turn continues.

To effectively influence Iran, the opposing strategies must understand and take advantage of vulnerabilities created by socio-economic conditions in the psychological dimension. Just as for the Revolution, the appropriate conditions made the audiences ripe for Khomeini's message. As Iran's economy worsened, the Ayatollah's message began to resonate. Recognizing the emerging opportunities by increased pilgrim flow to and from An Najaf, Khomeini rapidly increased the volume of his message when signs also indicated increasing effectiveness.

The most significant lesson of all, Khomeini achieved his objectives and desired effects while residing almost entirely outside Iranian borders, without the benefit of an army, or an organized political party. Instead, Khomeini accomplished his strategy by using a variety of networks that sped distribution and dissemination of his message enabling the widest possible audience access to generate a cascading array of effects. Khomeini used not only the mosque network, but also international media networks, telecommunication networks, and human networks of clerics, *bazaaris,* Hezbollah, and oil and postal workers. Today, the internet has become the new place for the third generation and middle class discourse, internet and cellular telephone technologies make rapid mobilization even a greater possibility. Any plans to influence Iran must identify accesses via all potential human, physical, and electronic networks.

Khomeini achieved unity of opposition audiences through the purposeful vagueness of his ideas and identification of a common denominator: the hate for the Shah. By not exposing too many details of his proposed Islamic government too early, Khomeini avoided infighting thus held together a broad opposition coalition just long enough to remove of the Shah. Once mass mobilization occurred, second order affects also divided the military rank and file between loyalties for the Shah and people, producing fragmentation and mass desertions.

The role of the BBC and mass media in the Revolution was critical to the Revolution's success. Khomeini understood the popularity of the BBC among Iranians. In An Najaf he

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possessed no international media access, however, once in Paris his influence and access to all Iranians and the international community became magnified beyond measure. Today accessibility into Iran from the outside is far greater than the 1970s making the indirect approaches by Iran's opposition and enemies an even a greater possibility. The current information environment allows far greater outside penetration by satellite based communications into Iran while cellular phones allow live exposure of regime actions out of Iran, both totally ignoring geographic borders.

Although the Ayatollah received positive BBC coverage night after night he still continued his program of cassette infiltration. Often printed in black and white, these simple memorandum and hand bills sometimes copied and reproduced at multiple locations provided a cheap an effective means to get the word out and into hands of the Iranian people. Although today's internet and cell phone technologies permeate across Iran and the Middle East, they should not be considered a panacea and a sole means of dissemination of the message. Unlike the 1970s, US presence in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Qatar, Pakistan, and Afghanistan now offers unprecedented opportunities for infiltration from multiple directions enabling eventual penetration deep into Iran.

Today, not unlike the Shah, Ahmandinejad's total mismanagement of the Iranian economy now fuels social stresses, attitudes, motivations, and perception related vulnerabilities. Like the Shah, this brings the current regime's legitimacy into question with the third generation. Not only Iran's third generation, but the emerging conditions also make intellectuals, students, and large portions of the bazaar ripe for psychological dislocation and rising internal dissent.

If popular dissent increases, the internal pressure to push for democratic reform and compromise, as well as, internal governmental distrust will increase. Counter-intuitively efforts to raise the level of internal dissent may also support objectives for regional stability. *The premise being an inwardly focused Iran would possess less ability to focus outwardly across the region threatening the interests of other nations.*

Internal paranoia and fear of losing population control characterizes the regime. If internal dissent rises, the regime will have two choices: reform to appease the population or delay reforms allowing dissent to build. The risk of overreaction by the regime also rises. This may cause the regime to lash out attempting to stamp out the resistance. Physical overreaction may permanently sever the threads within the Persian societal knot. This strategy also incurs risks. An increasingly paranoid regime may strike out at external threats such as US or Israel in order to rally its own popular internal support.

While primarily focused on the psychological aspects of influencing Iran, no single pronged strategy can ever succeed. The psychological dimension must possess mutually reinforcing diplomatic, military, and economic efforts. While low level private diplomatic contact might help the US government officials understand Iranian intentions, direct contact between heads of state or the Secretary of State will only support Iranian propaganda schemes. High level face to face negotiations or contact would ultimately be used to prop up Iranian legitimacy and status as a regional power. Therefore, direct contact only reinforces the positions of a government we desire to reform. Based on the network theories presented, face to face communications are unnecessary to influence the regime. With only six degrees separation between our head of state and that of Iran, there will always be a "socially prolific few" who can carry the message indirectly to the Iranian leadership. Most significant, the Iranian leadership always listens intently. Every time a US president speaks of Iran, the regime immediately responds within 24 hours, so access is absolutely not a problem.

Should war with Iran occur our ability to seize the key human terrain will be decisive. The real battle must first be won in the minds of Iranian youth. The third generation controls Iran's future. The current regime's reins of power and its legitimacy now rest uneasily dependant on the third generation's continued loyalty. Any physical attack on Iran without proper psychological preparation will only serve as a regime vehicle to rally its people around the revolutionary flag pole. The clock of the current regime's hold on power is ticking and the

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leadership knows it. Iran may seek such a rallying event to distract its youthful population before

a total break with the past revolutionary culture occurs. In ten years, as the first generation retires,

the third generation will totally dominate the demographics of Iranian society filling large

portions of political, military, and economic, and educational leadership. Therefore, effective use

of time is critical.

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